SIRAT-UN-NABI

ALLAMA SHIBLI NU'MANI

Rendered into English

by

M. TAYYIB BAKHSH BUDAYUNI

Vol. I

SIRAT-UN-NABI

[THE LIFE OF THE PROPHET]

(peace be upon him)

Volume I

By

'ALLAMA SHIBLI NU'MANI

Rendered into English by

M. TAYYIB BAKHSH BUDAYŪNI

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book is a faithful English translation of 'Allama Shibli Nu'māni's famous work "*Sirat un-Nabi*". The learned author is a well-known figure in the literary world and requires no commendation.

This valuable work on the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) also hardly stands in need of any introduction. 'Allama Shibli has indeed earned great fame for this work. This biography was originally written in urdu and a great need was being felt for rendering it into English. Mr. Budayūni has taken the task of translating it. The translation is a very successful attempt. It is not only correct but couched in good English.

The first volume of the English translation of "*Sirat-un-Nabi* is being offered for the benefit of those English-khowing reader who cannot read the original text in urdu. The second volume is under the process of printing and will be presented to the reader shortly.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my brother Muhammad Iqbal Siddiqi for his self-sacrificing labour in preparing the manuscript for the press, reading its proofs and adding an Index to the book.

MUHAMMAD IKRAM SIDDIQI

LAHORE :
20th December, 1979

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

PREFACE BY THE TRANSLATOR

It has always been the duty of a writer to explain why he has undertaken a particular literary venture. How funny it looks that a writer undergoes immense hardships, faces innumerable difficulties ; and when publicity crowns his efforts, he is called upon to explain his motives before the jury of the readers. I too, though as a mere translator, am no exception. To a habitual questioner my answer is that as I was in a mood of writing, I undertook the translation of an important book so far left inaccessible to the English-knowing readers. To others of a serious cast, my reply would be different.

There have been instances in the history of the world when the genius of a single man has contributed more towards the formation of a new creed than the cumulative efforts of scores of men not so gifted. The advent and appearance of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), a rare diamond with many a facet cut by Creator's own Hands, changed the very course of history and wrought a complete overhaul of society which can rightly be called more than a miracle. Born in a country with the cheerless spectacles of vast trackless and arid stretches of burning sand all round and brought up among the people proverbially known for their barbarism and ignorance, Muhamad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) dazzled the whole world with the sublimity of his mission and the grandeur of his religion. which was to emphasise the Oneness of God and to unite the humanity

in universal brotherhood. Almost all the great divine preachers who had preceded him had claimed an exclusive distinction for the votaries of their respective faiths in some form or the other. It was Muhammad (peace and blessigs of Allāh be upon him) alone among all the prophets who confirmed all the preceding prophets and who taught his followers not to make any distinction between man and man on the basis of caste, colour or country. It was the result of his pious teachings that Bilal, the Abyssinian slave, was honoured more than any dignitary of the Quraish. It was also the result of his teachings that the Arab barbarians were made the most civilized ones. He taught the people to treat all equally, and his creed was marked by healthy departure from those ancient notions which had corrupted the basic belief in the unity of man. It was he who taught that the voice of a king and that of a slave carried the same weight in Islam.

It was perhaps Dr. Johnson (1709-1784 C.E.) who first of all told his readers that the life of even an ordinary man may be as instructive and educative as that of Alexander, the Great. Such being the case none can deny the assertion that the life of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) can serve a far greater purpose. To a Muslim it has, undoubtedly, all the greater importance, whereas a non-Muslim too can derive the utmost benefit from studying the words and works of a man held in high esteem for his virtues and good characteristics. In biography alone a reader can see, with unmistakable clearness, the Prophet's attitude towards various aspects of religion and society; and biography alone is the surest means of avoiding misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

I ventured to translate the *Sirat an-Nabi*, the voluminous master-piece of 'Allama Shiblī Nu'mānī with the object of presenting to the English-speaking public the life of the Prophet with whose life-history they are not ac-

quainted to the extent to which his greatness entitles him. The unique personality of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) has upon the pen of scholars a claim that cannot be lightly set aside.

Life-Sketches or biographies of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) there have been many, big and small. They differ in size and detail, and when one reads a few of them, one begins to wonder whether there is nothing in the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) beyond the accounts of battles and a few stories that please the fancy of the pious, but often leave the critical readers a gape for want of satisfaction. Nor have the Western writers made any contribution in this behalf, beyond translating from the oriental languages, or editing works of Muslim authors like Imam Zohrī, Tabari, Ya'qubī, Ibn Sa'd and others. When year after year the same stuff is retailed by various writers and compilers, the readers, specially the western and non-Muslim are led to think and conclude, consciously or incidentally, that there was really nothing more interesting or worth reporting in the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him).

It was late Mr. Amir 'Ali who wrote the famous *Spirit of Islam*. Among the Indian writers his contribution is important no doubt. But even the tone of this book is apologetic, especially in the life. A few other translations of the works of the original biographers of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) have also been made. But they too are not quite satisfactory. Moreover, such efforts have been so few and far between that they can in no way satisfy the ever-eager readers desirous of getting most anthentic and detailed account of the Prophet's life.

Among the modern orientalists some have taken pains in writing on this subject. They may be classified into two groups: those who still draw from the ancient and biased writers of the XVIIIth and XIXth centuries and those who

try to see the truth in their own way. We need not speak of the earlier writers, because modern researches have exposed the veracity or otherwise of their statements. But about the other group I wish to say something. These people too, either on account of lack of access to the original sources or owing to their special manner of treatment of the subject commit mistakes which even a lay-man cannot excuse.

On the whole the *Sirat an-Nabi* by Shibli Nu'mani is comprehensive to a very great extent, and this is why I have made it a subject of my serious venture. It would be quite in the fitness of things to give a short biography of the 'Allāma Shiblī in the following lines.

Shams al-'Ulemā 'Allāma Shiblī Nu'mānī was born in the year 1857 C.E., in the village known as Bindawal, district A'zamgarh, U.P. He received his early education under the able supervision of Maulvi Shukr Allāh and then he went to Maulvi Muhammad Fārūq Chiryākotī for learning Arabic. He undertook journeys to as distant places as Rampur, Saharanpur, Lucknow, Lahore etc., for acquiring knowledge of Hadīth, Tafsīr and such other Islamic subjects. When nineteen years old he undertook the Pilgrimage to the Holy Ka'ba (1876 C.E.) and there he had the opportunity of studying great works in the libraries of Medina. The 'Allāma was naturally a poet and has composed verses in Urdu and Persian. He often presided over *Mushā'irahs* held in his native district of A'zamgarh. Though born in a land-lord family, he did not like this type of life. He took to the course of law and passed the law examination. He started his practice at A'zamgarh ; but here again his natural inclination compelled him to give it up. Later on he became an *Amīn* (collection officer) and again had to give it up. Now he devoted his time to study.

'Allama's brother, Mehdī by name was receiving his education at the Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College (now Muslim University) Aligarh. In 1882 C.E., the 'Allama went to Aligarh to see his brother. Here he came into contact with Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who perceiving the qualities, talents and capabilities of this learned giant, appointed him as the Professor of Arabic and Persian. Here the 'Allama could get all that he wanted—scholars, books and sufficient time and ample opportunities to read and write. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's own library stood him in good stead; and he took to writing. First of all he authored the book known as *Al-Ma'mūn* which was soon followed by *Sirat Nu'mān*. His quest for knowledge took him to Egypt, Syria and Rome. It was on this journey that he gathered material for his next book *al-Fārūq*. After the death of Sir Sayyid in 1889 C.E., the 'Allāma resigned from the M.A.O. College and settled in A'zamgarh.

Very soon the 'Allama was called to Hyderabad (Deccan) by Maulvi Sayyid 'Alī Bilgrāmi. Here he was appointed as Nāzim (an executive post). It was during his stay at Hyderabad that he wrote *at-Ghazāli*, *Life of Maulana Rūm*, *'Ilm al-Kalam* and *Mawāzana Anīs wa Dabīr*.

In the 19th century, after the failure of the first Independence Movement of 1857 C.E., the Indian Muslims were opposing the western type of education and the reforms of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan. The old traditional institutions

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* Here I wish to inform my readers that the 'Ulemā of these days had opposed the Sir Sayyid Movement mainly because Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan wanted to instil his own views and convictions into the minds of the young students of the Muslim community. My own great-grandfather Maulana 'Alī Bakhsh Khan was a contemporary and fast friend of Sir Sayyid. Both were Sub-Judge; and the English Government had bestowed upon both of them the title of Khan.

'Ali Bakhsh Khan wrote three books : *Shihāb Thāqib*, *Taid al-*

were also not keeping their pace with time. Hence rose the necessity of institutions charged with Muslim faith and correct educational atmosphere. In 1894 C.E., Nadwat al-'Ulemā (a famous centre of Arabic and religious education) was started at Lucknow with a view of imparting right type of education to the Muslims. Muhammad 'Alī of Kanpur was its founder. After Muhammad 'Alī's resignation the condition of the Nadwat al-'Ulemā deteriorated. 'Allāma Shiblī himself went to Lucknow and took the institution in his own charge. He continued discharging this responsibility till 1913 C.E., when as a result of the machinations of his opponents he had to resign. Now he came to A'zamgarh and established an institution for editing and compiling books. It was styled as "Dar al-Musannifīn". Even today this institution is serving the Muslims and a few years back its Silver Jubilee, was celebrated with great pomp and show.

'Allāma Shiblī acquired fame not only in India but in foreign countries too, where the alumini held him in high regard. In 1892 C.E., the Sultan of Turkey conferred

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Islam and *Muwayyid al-Islam* and through them refuted the baseless assertions made by Sir Sayyid in his famous Commentary of the Qur'ān. Briefly speaking, Sir Sayyid did not believe in the miracles performed by prophets like Moses, Jesus, Shu'aib or Jethro and others. He thought it better to go to London instead of going to Mecca and Medina. He thought the prophets were mere reformers like Steele and Adison. He refused to perform any act of worship if it caused even the slightest inconvenience to the man. Such views were responsible for the opposition of the 'Ulemā of the day. Later on Sir Sayyid had to yield. He appointed a committe under the convenership of 'Ali Bakhsh and this committee took charge of the religious education of the students at the M.A.O. College. As for the education of English to the Muslims, the 'Ulemā did not oppose Sir Sayyid. My own great-grand-father 'Ali Bakhsh had sent his own nephew Shakur Bakhsh Qādri to the M.A.O. College, Aligarh for graduation. Translator.

upon him the esteemed badge of honour known as "Tamgha Majīdiah" ; and in 1894 C.E., the Government of India also recognised his merits and honoured him with the title of "Shams al-'Ulemā." This year he was appointed as the Fellow of the Allahbad University. The Royal Asiatic Society, in recognition of his meritorious services nominated him its member. His Exalted Highness the Nizām of Deccan too granted him a pension of Rs. 100/- p.m. ; and later on increased it to Rs. 300/- a month. The famous English Orientalist Professor E. G. Browne ; in his fourth volume of Literary History of Persia acknowledged expressly his indebtedness to the 'Allama and appreciated his *Shi'r al-'Ajam*. His last book was *Sirat an-Nabi*, which very unfortunately could not see the light of publication during the 'Allama's life-time. After an illness of fifteen days the great 'Allama breathed his last on November 18th, 1914 C.E. (May his soul rest in peace.)

His Literary Monuments: The 'Allama has a large number of works to his credit, chief of them being, *'Ilm al-Kalām, al-Mamun, al-Faruq, Mawazanah Anis wa Dabir, She'r al-'Ajam, Majmu'ah Kalām Urdu, Diwan Shibli, Sirat an Nabi* and a number of articles. His writings are the results of his intense research and painstaking studies. His style is marked by the grandeur of florid phraseology and rhetorical expressions. It is worth noting that sometimes the 'Allāma has allowed his pen liberty to be influenced and guided by his own convictions even at the cost of impartiality. However, to quote Rām Babu Saxena, "His genius combined a Faqīh, a Muhaddith, a Mufassir, a Muwarrigh, a Poet, a Professor etc., etc.

The 'Allāma being a distinguished scholar of Arabic, Persian and Urdu fell under the influence of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan the leader of the "Rationalist" group in India. Like him he too feared the western tronds of the

day and did not include in his writings anything that baffled the reason of the so-called Rationalists. In this present book too he has either ignored or brushed aside as spurious material all that did not appeal to reason. It is unfortunately the lack of this that pinches and strikes a reader of this book. While translating this book, I too felt this and I think I would be failing in my duty to God and to humanity at large, if I do not express my own humble' views on these points without ever trying to reflect on the high position and exalted status of the great 'Allāma.

Sirat un-Nabi : In his Preface, the 'Allāma has declared that the ancients did not care to compile books on Sīrah. But his illustrious disciple, late Sayyid Sulaimān Nadvī, who completed the book, had to correct this in the foot-notes adduced by him later on, in the subsequent editions. The 'Allāma has asserted that the ancients cared more to compile books on Hadīth as the Islamic Fiqh was going to be based on them and they did not care to compile books purely on Sīrah. Everyone knows, and he himself has remarked that Imām Zohrī was the first man who campiled book on Sirah ; and it is common knowledge that Imām Zohrī was the grand-teacher of Imām Bukhārī, the most famous traditionist and the compiler of the famous *al-Sahīh*. Hence it goes beyond saying that the ancients too had begun compiling books of Sīrah earlier. Again in books of traditions themselves to find chapters called Kitāb al-Maghāzī and Kitāb al-Shamā'il ; and they are but booklets on Sīrah.

Authenticity of Books of Sirah. While speaking of the books on Sīrah compiled by the earlier writers, the 'Allāma has endangered the authenticity of many trustworthy writers saying that their books contain much that is spurious. As a proof of his statement he has quoted a

couplet of Hāfiz Zain al-Dīn 'Irāqī ; which runs thus : "The student or lover of Sīrah must know that books on Sīrah contain facts faithfully narrated, as well as those that are Munkar." With great respect to the 'Allāma I wish to point out that in the original couplet the word used is "Unkara" and not "Wudi'ah." The great 'Allāma has translated the word "Unkara" to give the meaning of "Wudi'ah" or "Concocted or Spurious or Fake." To him a Munkar tradition should be refused acceptance. In my humble opinion Hāfiz Zain al-Dīn 'Irāqī meant to say that in books of Sīrah the compilers did not always base their narration on Sahīh traditions alone and had to depend on Munkar traditions as well. It is common knowledge that a Munkar Hadīth has sufficient reason to fight its own case successfully. Even the strict traditionists did not accept a Munkar Hadīth only when dealing with some important point of Islamic Fiqh or Law. In other cases they did not object to accepting a Munkar report, provided it did not go against the accepted rules framed by the traditionists. They refused to accept only the Da'īf or Maudū (Weak or concocted) Ahadīth. 'Allama Sayūtī, the famous traditionist, in his book *al-Wajīz* (chapter on Feeding) says : "Munkar Hadith is something quite different from a Maudū or a concocted one": The same 'Allama, in his book *Sharh Tadrib*, says, "Shaikh al-Islam has mentioned three conditions under which a Munkar Hadīth must be trusted ; that is to say it should not have been reported by liars or by those to whom lie can be ascribed or who commit errors easily. The second condition is that such a report should be according to the clear cut order of God and should not run contrary to it : but should further support it. Thirdly, while acting upon such Munkar report one should not have faith in its narrator's veracity but should act upon it thinking it to be according to some clear-cut orders of God. These last two con-

ditions have been mentioned by Ibn Salām and Ibn Daqīq al-'Id". All this shows that a Munkar Hadīth or report is not so reliable as to be ranked equally with Sahīh report, but is also not to be ignored like a Da'if (weak) or Maudū (concocted) Hadīth.

Ibn Ishaq : While dealing with Muhammad Ibn Ishāq, the 'Allāma has remarked that Imām Mālik had criticised him and had not accepted his narration. It is also a fact that Imām Mālik at a subsequent stage had to reconsider his views and later on had withdrawn his previous remarks. Along with his letter of apology, the learned Imām had also sent a befitting gift to Ibn Ishāq and the latter had accepted it. Moreover, the views of a contemporary do not at all times hold good: Imām Mālik's withdrawal of his earlier remark clearly shows and proves the authenticity of Muhammad Ibn Ishāq. The 'Allāma has overlooked this important point. The 'Allāma has declared Wāqidī to be a declared liar. But while describing As'ad Ibn Zurārah's presence before the arrival of the six leaders of the tribes of the Aus and the Khazraj, the 'Allāma has depended on none but Wāqidī.

The 'Allāma has depended on *'Aini Sharh Bukhāri*, while fixing the date of the Hijra era. But here, too, he has erred in calculating the correct date. The 'Allāma has asserted that the date of the Hijra is 733 Iskandari (Alexandrian era). In *'Ainī* itself it is mentioned that Jesus Christ was crucified (as it is believed) in the year 311 Iskandari. It is also known to all that the Hijra took place round about the year 622 C.E. Thus it is clear that the Hijra took place round about the year 933 Iskandari and not in 733 Iskandari as is wrongly mentioned by the 'Allāma.

Again while describing facts about the battle of Badr and dealing with the war-prisoners taken at Badr, the 'Allāma has mentioned that the ropes with which 'Abbās

was tied were loosened. This has created an ambiguity in the mind of the reader, who may start thinking that the ropes of 'Abbās alone were loosened. As a matter of fact the ropes of all the prisoners of war were loosened.

Bahira, the Monk. The 'Allāma seems to have no faith in the report regarding Bahira, the Monk, chiefly because one of its narrators is 'Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Ghazawan, whom he considers to be unreliable. 'Abd al-Rahman is one of the reporters on whose authority reports have been mentioned in the *al-Sahīh* of Imām Bukharī. Had he been unreliable in the least, authorities like Imām Bukhārī would never have quoted from him. Thus 'Allāma's rejection of this report on this ground alone is quite unjustifiable. The second reason for this report being considered spurious is that the last reporter of this report is Abū Mūsā Ash'arī, who was neither himself present at the time nor gives the name of the man from whom he heard it. This too is an error. It is just possible that Abū Mūsa Ash'arī might have heard it from the Prophet himself. Moreover, the statements of the Companions are always taken for granted as the traditionists regard them all to be just and reliable ; and the Allāma too has admitted this in the case of other companions.

Abū Sa'īd, in his book *Sharaf al-Mustafā* has given details of the Prophet's meeting with the Monk. He says that this meeting took place when Khadīja (may Allāh be pleased with her) had sent the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) to Syria along with her own slave Maisirah. Abū Sa'īd has mentioned this meeting and has given the name of the monk as Bahira. Ibn Mandah and Abū Nu'aim, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās have both spoken of a trip to Syria and of the meeting with Bahira, the Monk. *Isabah* and *Asad al-Ghabah* too speak of this trip and have given description of Bahira. It is strange that the learned 'Allāma has borrowed much from the above mentioned

books but he did not consult them when declaring this story of the meeting to be baseless.

Miracles and Divine Help Through the Angels : As mentioned earlier, the 'Allāma belonged to the Sir Sayyid school of thought. It is perhaps on account of this association that the 'Allāma too has most beautifully avoided expressing his views on the Divine help to the Muslims at the time of the battles of Badr, Uhud, the Allies etc. Let us discuss this here.

On the occasion of the battle of Badr, the Muslims were helped by God through the angels. The Qur'ān clearly says : "When thy Lord revealed unto the angels, I am with you, so make firm those who believe : I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve ; so strike above their necks and strike every finger tip off them. This is because they acted adversely to God and His apostles...then surely God is severe in requitting evil (8 : 12)." Elsewhere, while dealing with the incidents of the battle of the Trenches, the Qur'ān says : "O' you who believe, Call to mind the favour of God to you when there came upon you hosts, and We sent against them a strong wind and host that you saw not, and God sees what you do (33:10)." In addition to these Verses there are reports mentioned in *al-Sahih* of Bukharī and in other books of traditions which clearly prove that God sent angels to help the Muslims; and that the angels even took active part in actual fighting. A report mentioned in the *Sahih* of Bukharī runs thus : "Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ (may Allāh be pleased with him) says that on the day of Uhud he saw the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and saw two persons fighting a pitched battle for him. These men were in white clothes and were neither seen before nor after the battle." Similarly, another book *Ausāf Muhammadi* by Sayyid Ausāf 'Alī, has other reports. In one such report Abū Buraida (may Allāh be pleased with

him) is reported to have remarked thus: "On the day of the battle of Badr, he brought three heads of infidels before the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and said that he himself had killed two of them and the third one had been killed by a very tall man wearing white clothes. At this the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) had remarked that the man was an angel. Similarly, the same book has it that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) asked Gabriel who was that man who used to utter the words *Khairdum Uqdum* ? At this Gabriel had told the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) that man was an angel. These and similar reports, mentioned in authentic books, clearly prove that in the battles of Badr, Uhud and the Trenches God sent the angels and that they helped the Muslims even by means of actual fighting at the time of necessity. About this fact of Divine help through the angels the 'Allāma seems to be in some doubt. In one of the Qur'ānic verses mentioned above (8 : 12) God orders the angels to strike every finger tip off the infidels. Here some people have taken the side with the negligible number of commentators who hold that in this verse the addressees are the Muslims and not the angels. But eminent commentators, like Fakhr al-Din Razi, Jalālain, etc., have clearly declared the angels to have been the addressees. Hence it becomes crystal clear that on the occasion of these battles God helped the Muslims through the angels, who took active part in the fihting. Similarly, in the battle of the Trenches God sent strongly-blowing wind (known as Saba) and a host of angels to help the Muslims ; and as a result of their help the non-believers were forced to abandon the siege. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) as Bukhārī and *Mishkāt* have it, is reported to have remarked that God helped the Muslims with the wind called Saba. Authorities, while commenting on this report have mentioned that Saba and Dabūr were

two kinds of very strongly blowing winds. God had sent Dabūr to destroy the people of Ād and Saba was sent to destroy the non-believers during the battle of the Trenches. Thus it is established beyond any shadow of doubt that the Divine help through the angels on the occasions of these battles is an undeniable fact, which must be admitted by all.

Islam of the Parents of the Prophet : The 'Allāma has mentioned that the foster-father of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) Hārith (the husband of Halīma) had accepted Islam and in this connection has mentioned a treatise styled as *Risalah Jathimah fi Islam Halimah.* But I wonder why the great 'Allāma has not spoken a word about the Islam of the Prophet's real parents. It is a pity that almost all the biographers of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) have ignored to mention the conversion of the Prophet's parents to Islam after their death. Some people hold that there arises no question of the Prophet's parents embracing Islam as they had died much before the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) attained prophethood. But those who believe in the veracity of Hadith, must remember that in books of Hadīth there is a report mentioned on the authority of 'Ā'isha (may Allāh be pleased with her) to the effect that while on his way to Mecca on the occasion of the Last Pilgrimage, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) looked much worried and sad. When the people reached the place known as Abwā', the pilgrims halted there. Then the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is reported to have gone to the jungle. After a long time he returned from there. 'Ā'isha saw that his face was shining like the full moon. She asked the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) the reason of his earlier sadness and his subsequent happiness. At this the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) told her that he was worried because he could

not intercede on behalf of his parents on the Day of Judgment as his parents had died before he attained prophethood. At his prayer God had revived his parents to life and they had embraced Islam and again God had restored them back to their earlier condition. This report is mentioned in authentic books of traditions by Imām Dār-Qutnī, Khatīb Baghdādī, Ibn 'Asākir, Ibn Shāhīn and others. In the commentary of *Dala'il al-Khairat*, styled as *Matla' al-Masarrat Sharh Dala'il al-Khairat*, while dealing with the name of God, this report has been mentioned as a proof of His name "Muhi'ī" (the Reviving).

In the *al-Sahih* of Bukhārī there is a report mentioned on the authority of Anas (may Allāh be pleased with him) that some one asked the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) about his own father. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) told him that his father was in Hell. Hearing this that a man became much sad. Then the Prophet (peace and blesssings of Allāh be upon him) told that man that his father and his own father were both in Hell. In this report the word used is اب (*Ab*). Commentators, while commenting on this report have mentioned that the Prophet used the word اب (*Ab*) and this word, as is used in the Qur'ān for Ādhar, the uncle of Abraham, gives the meanings of uncle. They say that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) meant his uncle Abū Tālib was in Hell.

In *Fiqh Akbar* by Imām Abū Hanīfa (edited much after him by his disciples) it is mentioned that the parents of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) died non-believers. 'Allāma Tahtāvī has discussed this report too. He has declared that this report is but an addition or rather an interpolation made by some of his followers. Moreover, in view of the above-mentioned report this view too stands rebutted.

The author of *Subul al-Salam* has discussed this point

in greater detail. He has mentioned a report quoted by 'Allāma Tahtāvī. The report says that a certain scholar thought over this report quoted on the authority of 'Ā'isha (may God be pleased with her). He thought that if the report had been correct, the compilers of the *Sihah Sittah* (the Six Authentics) must have mentioned it. He remained thinking over this throughout the whole night. He was so much restless and worried that while dozing he got a part of his skirt burnt in the flame of the lamp. In the morning a certain soldier came to invite him to his house for breakfast. While on his way to the house of the soldier, the scholar had to pass through a forest. When he was passing through the jungle, he saw a green-grocer selling vegetables under a tree. Seeing the scholar the vegetable seller stopped his horse and recited the following verses to him :-

آمنت ان ابا النبی وامه　　احیا هما الحی القدیر الباری
حتی لقد شهر ابر سالته　　صدق فتلك کرامة المختار
وبه الحدیث ومن یقول بضعفه　　فهوالضعیف عن الحقیقة عاری

(I have faith in the fact that the parents of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) were brought back to life by God, the Omni-Potent, till they embraced Islam and stood witness to his prophethood ; and this was a miracle. He who does not believe in the veracity of this Hadīth is himself away from reality). The vegetable seller told him that the compilers of the Six *Sihah* had found thousands of Ahādīth to be quite correct. But their collections contain in them only a few thousand Ahādīth. He told him that if the narrators of a Hadīth were men worthy of trust, the Hadīth reported on their authority must be accepted. He further told the scholar that he was going to have his break-fast at the house of a man whose income was all illegal. The scholar wanted to ask him something more. But, lo ! the vegetable seller was gone. Where and how,

God knows better. The poor scholar returned home dozed and astonished. People whom he met on his way back told him that they had never seen any vegetable seller there in that jungle.

'Allāma Ibn Hajar, too, in his book *Umm al-Qura*, has mentioned this Hadīth with his own comments thereon. He holds it to be quite true and dependable.

All these facts show that the parents of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) died non-Muslims, as their death occurred when there was no Islam. But later on, at the request of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) God revived them to life and they embraced Islam. This is nothing but a miracle. As for Abū Tālib, he refused to accept Islam despite the Prophet's repeated requests. It was for this reason that despite his meritorious services in the way of Islam, he is sent to Hell and is wearing shoes of fire ; and this is the least punishment given to him. 'Allāma Shiblī either did not consult Dār-Qutnī, Tahtāvī, Ibn 'Asākir, Ibn Shāhīn and others, or having seen this report thought it better to keep silent on this point as it all went against his principle of not giving any credence to anything that baffled reason.

A similar fate has been meted out to the reports concerning the strange happenings on the day of the Prophet's birth. The 'Allāma has dismissed them all most beautifully, chiefly because none of the companions, including Abū Bakr, was older than the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). He, mainly on this ground has declared all such reports to have been baseless and spurious. Here again he overlooked the fact that all such happenings have been mentioned in reliable books of Siyar (biography) on the authority of Safia, (may Allāh be pleased with her), an aunt of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) who had embraced Islam, or on the authority of other com-

panions, who had heard them from Āmina, 'Abd al-Muttalib or Abū Tālib.

AUTAS : While dealing with the details of the battle of Hunain, 'Allāma's language has created some ambiguity, and the reader is led to gather from the talk of Duraid that the battle-field was Autas. Whereas, it was actually the valley of Hunain. Duraid's dialogue must have taken place on the way when the army of Mālik was at Autās. Later on the 'Allāma himself has described that the fleeing army of Mālik took refuge in the fort of Autās, which was later on besieged by the Muslims.

In the case of Māriyah Qibtiyah too the 'Allāma has not elaborated the controversial points as much as they deserved ; and much is left unspoken.

Notwithstanding all this, the present work of 'Allāma Shiblī is the first and the most exhaustive attempt in this direction ; and so it is worthy of every praise. Its comprehensiveness and reliability make it unique and it remains still unsurpassed. Its language shows mastery of the compiler over the language. At many places, I admit, I have failed in doing justice to the language. English though a very rich language, still lacks equivalents of Arabic words. Take the word "رب" (*Rabb*), which in English admits many equivalents like Lord, Sustainer, Nourisher, Cherisher, Care-Taker etc., etc. Similarly the word "رحمة" (*Rahmat*) too is translated into English as Peace, Kindness, Generosity, Charity, Blessing, etc., etc. Moreover, at many places Shiblī's Urdu has become so much figurative and rhythmic as well as poetic that I have not succeeded in translating it in the manner it deserved. As for the details, it is enough to say that barring the original sources, one can hardly find any book in Urdu or in Arabic which can claim equality with this present work.

In the end I must confess that it is nothing short of a miracle that a non-entity like me has succeeded in bringing

out this translation of this master-piece. In this arduous job my courage and enthusiasm very often gave way. Many times I thought of abandoning this literary venture. But on every occasion none save my learned and most loving teacher, Mr. Sibtain Ahmad, B.A., B.T. (may his soul rest in peace) encouraged me ; and his exhortations enabled me to bring this arduous and uphill task to a successful close. I still remember how he used to pull my ears saying : "Read what you type and ask your ears if the English is good and beautiful ?" It was for this reason that I had to type and retype every page again and again. Thanks to his advice that I was saved of much embarrassment, and the present translation is the result of his most sincere guidance. I pray to God to bless his soul.

I am also much indebted to Maulānā 'Abd al-Mājid Daryābādī, a friend of my father. It was he who went through some parts of this work and gave his valuable suggestions. I am also much indebted to Dr. W. C. Smith, the then Director of Islamic Institute at the Mc-Gill University, Montreal, Canada. On knowing that I was doing this translation work without an Arabic-to-English dictionary, he sent to me his own volume of Elyas A. Elyas' Dictionary ; and it has been of immense help to me. It was the late Mr. Humayun Kabir, the then Minister in the Central Cabinet of India, who had promised to send me a foreword for this book. I, by nature dislike and am averse to sending reminders and he needed many. The result is obvious ; and this book does not contain any word from him. Still I am thankful to him for his generous intentions, which his political preoccupations did not allow to materialise.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not thank Maulānā Ziā Ahmad, late Chairman, Persian Deptt., Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. He loved me as if I was his real nephew. He helped me much in correcting the vowel-marks of the names of persons and places occurring in

this volume. The Maulānā died on 20-7-1973. May God bless his soul. Thanks are also due to Maulānā Khalīl Ahmad Khan for the learned advice that he gave me from time to time. Among the 'Ulema of Budā'ūn, Maulānā Khalil Ahmad Khān is the only man who deserves to be recognised as a scholar of Arabic and Persian. He helped me much in solving many of the problems that came in my way while doing this translation. May God grant him long life and health.

A certain Maulavī of of Budā'ūn gave me wrong vowel-marks of some names occurring in this volume. Having remained out of touch with Arabic books for a very long time, I thought it better to consult him in this matter. The vowel-marks that he gave me were transliterated by me. It was Mr. S. M. Tufail, the then Editor of the *Islamic Review*, Woking Surrey, England, who pointed out the mistakes; and I had to revise and correct all the names. Mr. S. M. Tufail deserves heart-felt thanks for his bringing out for the first time some instalments of this translation work in the *Islamic Review*. I must also thank Dr. Hamid Ullah who wrote a foreword for this work and gave me suggestions, which unfortunately I could not follow. I hope he will excuse me for not using "aa, ee, oo" for "ā, ī, ū" while transliterating Arabic words into English.

People say that the hand-writing of great men is very bad. I do not claim to be a great man. But I do claim that I am the unrivalled master of the worst hand-writing. My father-in-law knew this weakness of mine and he gave me his own type-writer. I am averse to writing anything with pen and ink. I always type all that I write. This type-writer has saved me much from disgrace and trouble. May God reward my father-in-law, Late Mr. Wahīd Ahmad Mas'ūd Farūqī, Ex-Parliamentary Secretary, Government

U.P., for this kind act. May God also grant the type-writer itself a long life and greater durability.

Thanks are also due to Mr. M. A. Kāzī for his undertaking the publication of this work. The Kazi Publications have been doing great service to Islam in this way. May God reward them all. The typist who typed the final copy of this translation was very slow at work and my friends and colleagues had to go to him many times just to remind him to expedite the typing.

In the end I pray to God to accept these humble efforts of mine. I also pray to the Holy Prophet to grant acceptance and approval to these efforts of mine. If approval and acceptance is given, I shall be well rewarded and will be the happiest man. I also pray to God to enable me to do more in His service. My only wish is that this book reaches as many hands as possible ; and this will be a great source of happiness to me. May God grant these wishes of mine. *Amin* !

M. Tayyib Bakhsh Budayuni,
Pili Kothi :
Sotha Mohalla,
Budaun (U.P.).
India.

14th April, 1978

INTRODUCTION

With the name of God, the Most Merciful, the All Merciful

The Prophet of Islam was a mercy unto all the worlds. There is no recorded religious and social reformer in the annals of mankind who succeeded so much in his life-time and also whose teachings continued without the changes of an iota for unending centuries.

As a conqueror of souls, during his last Pilgrimage he was accompanied by 140,000, Muslims at Arafat, with certainly ten times as much who had remained in their homes and did not come for Hajj that year. As a conqueror of countries, he began in the year 1, of Hijra, with part of the town of Medina, and ten years later, at the time of his death, he was ruling over three million square Kilometres of territory, expanding at an average by 800 Kilometres daily for continuously ten years ; and in this conquest scarcely one enemy was killed every month in the field of battle ! If such was his respect for human blood, his teaching was so reasonable that the countries acceding to the Muslim state in his time and in the time of his Companions——in the caliphate of 'Uthaman, fifteen years only after the death of the Prophet, the Muslim state extended from Andalusia to the Transoxian borders of China ——remain (with the exception of Spain) of Muslim religion even to-day.

No wonder, his life and work have attracted biographers since his life-time, and very voluminous books recount all that is known on him on the authority of eye-witnesses. Apparently little was left for posterity.

But Shibli Nu'mani was a blessing of God on modern Muslims. Born in a sub-Himalayan region, he undertook the compilation of a new biography of the Prophet of Islam, and succeeded in opening new vistas, and pioneered a new epoch in Islamic historiography.

Although his premature death deprived science of his great talents, his pupil and collaborator, Sayyid Sulaiman Nadvi, continued in the lines chalked out by the master, and brought to almost a successful end the M.S. of Shibli before he himself breathed his last.

This is the English version of the great Urdu Seerat-al-Nabi for which the translator, Mr. Tayyib Bakhsh merits the heart-felt thanks of the entire English-knowing world.

As the reader will himself gradually discover, the author has studied all that was found in the original sources in Arabic, and in cases of rare conflicting reports, has used most reasonable methods of literary criticism, in order to prefer one report to the other. After giving the life history, in two volumes as a back-ground, he has developed special volumes to such important topics as the religious and moral teachings of the Prophet, the philosophy of miracles, and several such topics.

May God vouchsafe the translator long life and health, to bring the task to a successful conclusion. May God bless those who are helping him to publish the great work, which will remain as a reference work for long with the grace of God.

Muhammad Hameedullah,
Edebiyat Fakultesi
Istanbul (Turkey)

Preface to the First Edition
by
Sayyid Sulaiman Nadvi

For seven years past, people all over the country have been talking of this biography of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) of which the first volume is now reaching its readers. It is a pleasure and satisfaction to me that this day I am acquitting myself of a part of the duty with which my late teacher, in his last moments, had entrusted me.

"How pleased to have lived a life,
that has achieved something."

But with this sense of pleasure and satisfaction, there is a feeling of grievous disappointment, for the author was not spared to present to the nation the fruits of his four years of labour, and to lay, with his own hands, at the door-steps of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) the wreaths and garlands his devoted hands had made of flowers called from hundreds of gardens.

The idea of writing a life of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) occurred to the author immediately after he had done with his *al-Fārūq*. Accordingly, in 1323 Hijra (1905 C.E.) he had written out a part, *i.e.*, upto the battle of Uhud, when he had to stop owing to certain difficulties. But the country continued to press its demand, and at last in 1330 Hijra (1912 C.E.) he decided to take upon himself this heavy responsibility. He made an appeal to the nation for an aid of fifty thousand rupees. Hundreds of Muslims came forward, the have-nots of the community as well as the moneyed magnates. But Fate had decreed this blessed

honour to go to Nawab Sultan Jehan Begum, the ruler of Bhopal, who out-did others and made the biographer of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) independent of any other patron, thus adding this lucky gem to her already rich store. History will perhaps record this deed of hers as the greatest of the achievements of Muslim women-rulers, for it was concerned with the august personality of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), who for the Muslims in all ages, has held a place of highest eminence in the universe.

On the death of the author, a second drawing of lots might have been necessary for the patronage of the project, but the ruler of Bhopal continued her generosity to the successors of the author as well. As once desired by the author, I have in this connection, to make a mention of Munshī Muhammad Amīn, supervisor of the history of Bhopal, who was responsible for bringing this good fortune to this sacred project.

The rough manuscript left by the author had been transcribed into a fair copy to the end of this volume; only there were a few marks at certain places for additions to be made with indications for the subject matter. These additions have subsequently been made where required. When the author had completed this volume, he probably thought of following a year-wise chronological order, after the fashion of the old writers, and of adding at the end of each year, less important facts under the head "Miscellaneous Events." Accordingly he had himself made such additions to the fair copy upto fourth year of the Hijra. When it was my turn to deal with the manuscript, I added miscellaneous facts of secondary importance at the end of the rest of the year-wise chapters. Notes and references were sometimes missing which were to be found out and inserted in the book; but care was taken to see that nothing

from the pen of the compilere should get mixed up with the writing of the author ; the additions by the compiler were, therefore, placed within brackets. Excepting the phrase *Sallalaho 'Alaihe Wasallam* and a few parenthetical words all the additions will, therefore, be found bracketed.

It was originally planned to cover in this volume the whole life of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) to the day of his passing away. But during the course of transcription by the calligraphers it was feared that it would run into eight hundred pages, which will tell] upon its get-up. The delay caused by the scarcity of necessary material for printing, also compelled us to divide it into two volumes. The first was, therefore, closed with the accounts of military campaigns, while the other was reserved for dealing with the life of peace, organisation of the community, propagation of Islam and the moral character and death of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). We pray to God to provide us with means for its publication.

"Sufficient unto me is Allāh; and an Excellent Trustee is He".

The author had not had the time to pen-down the opening lines. In his draft papers, accidentally a passage met the eye, which had been crossed out, and which failing a better substitute, now appears on the front page as a sacred bequest.

Sayyid Sulaiman Nadvi,
Dar al-Musannifin, A'zamgarh.
20th Rabi al-Thani, 1326 H.
(1908 C.E.)

Preface to the Second Edition

In the name of Allāh, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate"

It is four years since the first edition of *Sirat an-Nabi*, Vol. I, saw the light for the first time. We, the humble workers at the Dar al-Musannifīn, may well be proud of the popularity it has, by the grace of God, gained in these years. Not only were the general readers eager to order for it, not only did the princes and the upper classes consider it an act of piety to be of service to its publication, but, what is more, the select body of scholars and divines also appreciated it as it deserved.

There was hardly any section of the learned class that did not apply its own acid-test to its contents and research-work. The Hafiz (memorisers of the Qur'ān) read over the verses quoted, the traditionists verified its traditions, the literary class scrutinised its Arabic verses mentioned in it, the mathematicians checked up its date and chronologies, the genealogists examined the names mentioned therein, and the historians and biographers tested its facts, and we are grateful to all for having communicated to us their views and their findings, of which we have taken full advantage.

In the first edition, there were some misprints or other oversights for which we had shown our regrets at the end. Every effort possible for man has now been made to see this edition free from error and so shall it be, God willing. Those who wish to review and comment are requested to have this edition before them.

The first edition had a large size. There was a general demand for the second edition to be published in book-size, so that it might be handy and easy to use. This demand is now being complied with. God willing, each volume in the large size shall be followed by editions in the smaller.

28th Dhi Qa'd, 1339H. Sayyid Sulaiman Nadvi

Preface to the Fifth Edition

In the name of Allah, Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.

It is really fortunate, both for the editor as well as the author, that these volumes on the Prophet's biography, by the grace of Allāh, enjoyed a wide popularity, for which God is to be thanked a thousand times.

On the death of the author in Nov., 1914 C.E., the manuscript was entrusted to my humble self in accordance with his will. The sense of devotion a pupil should naturally cherish for his teacher made me shudder at the idea of tampering with a single word of the author's draft ; and whenever I had to take such liberty, because it was necessary, the thing haunted in my dreams like a night-mare. A fair copy of the manuscript had been made in the life-time of the author. I did not compare the final copy with the draft, or the draft with the sources. On the other hand I passed it on to the reader intact as a sacred trust, only making certain insertions within brackets as hinted by the author and explained in the Preface to the first edition.

This manuscript went into print after print and a comparison or verification of the sources was not considered necessary. But, it was often felt that there was need for certain corrections and additions here and there ; and accordingly I continued to put down such corrections and additions on a copy of the book from time to time.

This time when the book had to be printed again, it was thought that a comparison and verification with the

sources ought to be made. It was a colossal task. To go through dozens of books over again, turn over thousands of pages, scrutinise varying statements and add foot-notes where necessary was not less arduous than producing a book in itself. I am pleased to record that my worthy friend Maulānā Muhammad Ovais Nadvī, was of very great help to me in this undertaking. In exploring for facts and scrutinising them, in sifting various reports and in verifying the quotations with the original passages, which entailed a fresh survey of the whole literature on Hadith and Sīrah, he was extremely helpful.

Of course there were occasions when the views of the compiler differed from those of the author. In this edition notes have been added to disclose such differences. In some cases facts had been briefly stated and needed details, or had been briefly treated so as to leave room for doubts and misgivings ; on a few occasions it was necessary to warn against unguarded lapses. In short, all such flaws have been removed. Moreover, if in the course of our revisional study, a higher authority could be found to replace an inferior source of the draft manuscript, a reference to the higher one has been made.

Some unfortunate mistakes were discovered, in the fair copy of the manuscript, relating to the recording of digits and numbers, which is often the case with Urdu figures. These have been corrected. For instance, in connection with the marriage of Fātima (may Allāh be pleased with her) the price of 'Alī's coat-of-mail was given as *Sawa Rupiya* (a rupee and a quarter) and it had passed into print, whereas it ought to have been *Sawa Sau Rupiya* (one hundred and twenty-five rupees). Similarly, the enemy forces in the battle of Ahzab were recorded as numbering twenty-four thousand, whereas, according to some reports they were fourteen, and according to others ten thousand, which is the correct figure.

While engaged on this work, the author had to make use of some books in manuscript, for example *Raud al-Unaf*, which made it difficult to take full advantage of it. Now it has been published. There were others that he could never secure, for example *al-Bidāya wal Nihāya* by Ibn Kathīr. He was often found expressing regret that all his problems would have been solved, had he been able to get Ibn Kathīr's history. Thanks God, it has now been printed and anybody can have it. So was *Mustadrak* by Hākim non-available then, which has now gone into print and can be seen on every shelf. In short, access to these sources has made valuable additions to our knowledge, which have been utilised while revising the present work.

Particularly the following improvements have been attempted while preparing this edition :

1. All the facts recorded in the book, from the beginning to the end, have been verified from the books on Hadith and Sirah.

2. Explanatory notes have been added to correct a statement, ward off a doubt, remove an ambiguity or elucidate a point.

3. No statement of the author has been allowed to pass off unscrutinised, if it seemed to deserve a corrective.

4. References which the manuscript missed have been provided. In some cases only the names of the books had been mentioned now the pages or chapters have been specified.

5. Where the references mentioned only the pages, chapters and sections have also been named to enable the reader to verify a reference from any edition of the same book.

6. New publications on Hadīth and Sīrah that have appeared since the first edition of our book came out, have been consulted, and new information, if any, has been incorporated.

7. A reference to an inferior source has been seconded by one to a higher authority wherever such reference could be discovered.

8. To the name of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) the words *Sallallaho 'Alaihe Wasallam* have been appended in full, instead of the abbreviated form "*Sal'am*", so that the reader may not miss the chance of being himself blessed by wishing God's blessings to the Prophet.

Sayyid Sulaiman Nadvi

Author's Note

"In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful."
"All praise is due to Allāh, the Lord of the Worlds,
and His blessings be on His Prophet, Muḥammad,
his followers and Companions !"

Reasons for Compiling the Present Work

The first and the foremost duty we owe to humanity at large is the sacred task of raising society to the highest level of moral excellence. To achieve this end we have first to fix the right criteria for moral virtues——as piety, fear of Allah, chastity, benevolence, forgiveness, perseverance, self-sacrifice, self-respect——and then to see that they are taught and practised in our daily life all the world over.

The usual way to teach morality is by oral precept or preaching from the pulpit. Civilized communities, however, resort to wide circulation of high class literature as a more refined method of moral education. Vice may also be checked and morality forced upon the people under penalties. The last method of forcing people to become virtuous by compulsion is perhaps the crudest.

These are the methods that have been usually employed; even this highly civilized age of ours can do no better. But the most excellent and at the same time the most fruitful and practical aid is neither the pen nor the pulpit; nor does compulsion prove worthwhile. Virtue is best taught only when there comes on the stage some perfect embodiment of ethical excellence. A few syllables from his lips are far more effective than volumes of printed word ; and just a

little gesture from him is more forceful than the commands of a sovereign. Whatever ethical values we have today have emanated from such pious moral luminaries ; the rest of our achievements are but decorative tracery on the edifice of civilization.

Such divine souls as have made their debut on the stage of the world have been many. But, so far as known to history, each of them has been a paragon of some particular virtue. Jesus Christ taught only fortitude and forbearance, hospitality and contentment, peace and forgiveness. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the Christian Scriptures to hint at the moral gifts requisite for Government and State-craft. On the other hand, prophets like Moses and Noah taught their followers nothing of forgiveness and tolerance for all.[1] Hence the need of a new teacher

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1. (Note by the late Sayyid Sulaimān Nadvī, the compiler of Shiblī's *Sīrat al-Nabī*, and editor of the *Ma'ārif*, A'ẓamgarh, India) :
These lines refer to the people of the Book. Their prophets, as portrayed in their sacred books, bear the character here ascribed to them. Shiblī takes them for granted, and emphasizes the need for a perfect one who could be regarded as a complete embodiment of virtue. But Islam teaches us to have equal faith in the veracity of the missions of all the prophets ; and to regard them as possessing all the virtues that a prophet ought to have. The *Qur'ān* says :- "We differentiate not between any of His apostles". (*2* : 285). This verse enjoins upon us to consider all the prophets to be equally true and gifted with prophetic excellence. But side by side with this the *Qu'rān* says : "These apostles : We have preferred some of them above some others : of them are some unto whom Allāh spoke and some He raised many degrees. And We vouchsafed unto 'Īsā (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) the evidences, and We aided him with the Holy Spirit". (2 : 253). This verse says that in degrees of perfection, prophets slightly differ ; and, to reconcile the two divine statements, a detailed discussion is necessary.
The prophets were all equally endowed with all the perfections and moral excellence that a prophet ought to possess. But to meet the particular requirements of their time and surroundings, they did not practically reveal, in obedience to the Divine will all their prophetic→

at every stage. The world of man, in order to attain perfection needed an embodiment of excellence, who in his person might combine the qualities of a king and a saint, one who might wield the sceptre and yet remain a hermit, who might display the conqueror and yet live in indigence, who might give laws to the world, while telling beads, who could willingly resign himself to a life of poverty, while giving away enormous treasures with a free hand. Such an all-embracing personality, such a divine creation, could rightly be deemed to be the crown and glory of

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→ qualities. Some of them displayed a particular set of virtues, while others exhibited other perfections. In other words, the excellence or virtue needed in the particular circumstances was exhibited to the utmost, whereas the rest of the qualities, not in demand at the time, were not revealed to any remarkable degree, that being all according to a Divine plan.

In short the demonstration of every quality required a particular environment and special circumstances. But lack of exemplification, due to want of proper occasion, does not imply non-existence of intrinsic virtue. So if under certain aspects, some of the virtues were not exhibited, simply because they were not wanted, it does not then mean that those virtues were absent.

The prisoners of war taken in the battle of Badr by the Muslims are a case in point. Abū Bakr (Allāh be pleased with him) pleaded for their release on ransom, whereas 'Umar (Allāh be pleased with him) suggested their outright execution. At this the Prophet (peace and blesssings of Allāh be upon him) pointed towards Abū Bakr and remarked that so far as softness were concerned, God made hearts different ; and further observed about Abū Bakr that he was like Abraham and Jesus, whereas 'Umar was like Noah and Moses. Here one displayed the virtue of tenderness, while the other was stern. (*Mustadrak* by al-Ḥākim).

The foregoing saying of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is an indication of the difference between the holy characters of the prophets. Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) was the Last Messenger of God sent to all humanity, and so all the virtues possessed by him found a practical manifestation in his career. Each ray of light beaming→

creation itself, and so did God declare in the Qur'ān: "Today I have perfected for you your religion, and have completed My favours upon you, and am well-pleased with Islam as your religion". (5 : 3)

The world is mortal and time's fell hands spare nothing. Consequently, a perfect man, too, must be subject to the mortal onslaught of time. Thus, there arises the necessity of preserving for all time to come every syllable that drops from his lips, of recording every gesture and movement of his body, and of perpetuating each mark and line of his features, so that his personality may guide us, whenever such guidance is needed in the perilous voyage of life.

It is a strange coincidence that, just as none of the founders of other religions was meant to appear as a perfect embodiment of all virtues, so has none of them left behind a comprehensive record of his life. Take, for instance, Jesus Christ, who lived for thirty-three years. Out of these thirty-three, it is only three years we know about. The reformers of Iran are known to the world only through the *Shāh-Nāmah* of Firdausī, while the Indian Avtārs (Incarnations) are altogether lost in a haze of myth. Of Moses likewise, our knowledge is based primarily on the *Torah*, a book that came into existence about 300 years after the death of Moses himself. This was a clear sign from God that, just as the teachings and achievements of these prophets were not meant to last for ever, so we hardly needed anything more that their sketchy portrayals that

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→ forth from this Sun among the prophets served as a guiding star for humanity, and every nook and corner of this dark world received light from the manifold perfections he displayed. With all that, our view of the manifestation of perfections should not be allowed to be disparaging and derogatory to other prophets, for such an act may amount to spiritual condemnation. (For details see the essay on Tauhīd in Nashriyāt-i Rabbānī for Muharram and Safar, 1356 A.H., April-May, 1937 C.E.)

history has preserved. Providence itself is the best judge, and provides whatever is needed and whenever we need it.

Followers of various religions equally love the faith of their choice. If you ask directly which among the prophets is to be regarded as a perfect embodiment of virtue, the answer will reveal a large variety. But if you make a little variation in the wording and ask whether we have an authentic record of any prophet's life which has been compiled with a greater care for reliability than could ever be observed for Divine Books, and which, at the same time, is comprehensive enough to embrace all that he said or did, depicting in detail his manner of dress, his gait and deportment, his natural bent of mind and his mode of living—— how he ate and drank, woke and slept, laughed and talked ——if you ask such a question, then the only one answer possible will be: Muhammad (may my parents stand sacrifice for him).

Whatever has been said in the preceding lines was the religious aspect of the motive for undertaking this venture. Let us look at it from literary point of view.

"Sira" as a Branch of Literature

In literature, biography occupies an especial place. The life story of the meanest of us may be a lesson and a source of knowledge. What novel hopes our nobodies entertain, what strange plans they make, how they proceed on in their limited spheres of activity, how they rise up step by step and where they stumble, what opposition they encounter and then sit down dejected and tired, only to take rest, and again move onward——in short, all the varied panorama of effort and struggle, courage and daring that we meet with in the career of an Alexander may likewise be witnessed in the life of a poor peasant or labourer.

Thus all biography has lessons for us and leads us to the knowledge of truth; and for this purpose the 'MAN' dealt with is of little importance: the important thing is the

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facts and their range and authenticity——facts that expose to view the manifold turns and curves in a career. If, fortunately, the 'MAN' be superman and the details too exhaustive and absolutely authentic, biography should expect no better lot.

In view of these facts, none can deny that the life-history of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is an imperative need not only for the Muslims but for humanity at large. It is a necessity, not only religious or Islamic, but also literary, moral and cultural. In short, it is a necessity that meets our interests both in this world and in the Hereafter.

Being a Muslim, I was not oblivious to the duty of writing a biography of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) before undertaking any other literary work. But this tremendous and delicate task required much preparation and I dared not attempt it without proper planning. With all that, I felt the growing need of such a book more than ever.

Biography and 'Ilm al-Kalam

Formerly, biography was valued merely as a chronological history. It had nothing to do with 'Ilm al-Kalām. Modern critics, however, argue that, if religion simply means belief in God, the matter ends there. But, if faith in the prophethood is also a part of religion, then the question about the character and life of the person who was the Messenger of God and recipient of His revelation may naturally arise.

European biographers have painted the moral life of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) in the darkest colours. Pressed by present day needs, Muslims have generally lost touch with Arabic literature. Those who wish to know something of the Prophet, have, consequently, to resort to the biographies written by Europeans. By slow degrees, and yet continuously, they get poisoned. As a result, there is a large number of people who regard Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) as a mere reformer, and hold that if he was able to improve the social environment in any way, he had acquitted himself of his mission; while the fact that spots could also be detected (as they suppose) in his moral character does not affect his position.

These were the considerations that compelled me to undertake the arduous task of compiling a comprehensive book on the life of the Prophet. Apparently, this seemed to be an easy affair, as there are so many books on the Prophet's life in Arabic, and to produce a large and interesting book based on them would not mean more than a few

months' labour. In fact, however, nothing was more arduous and beset with difficulties than this work.

Further on, I shall try to show at length that so far no biography of the Prophet (peace and blessing of Allāh be upon him) has been based on authentic sayings.[1] Ḥāfiẓ Zain al-Dīn

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1. Here let another important and delicate problem be settled, which has been created by our lack of knowledge of the "*Sīra*" literature. Many of us regard "*Sīra*" as a part of Ḥadīth (sayings of the Prophet). They think that, if we sort out from the books of Ḥadīth facts that belong to the life of the Prophet, then we get "*Sīra*", the life history of the Prophet. As reliable books of Ḥadīth that contain not a single doubtful report are many, for instance, the *SIḤĀḤ SITTA* : it should be incorrect to assert that an authentic work on "*Sīra*" does not exist. To further understand this fact the following points should be borne in mind :

   (a) First of all we should decide what "*Sīra*" is ? The old traditionists and the Arbāb Rijāl (compilers of the life histories of the narrators) hold that "Maghāzī" and "*Sīra*" describe especially the facts pertaining to the campaigns (Ghazawāt) of the Prophet Hence the work by Ibn Isḥāq is called a book of "Maghāzi" as well as of "*Sīra*". Ḥafiẓ Ibn Ḥajar, in his book *Fatḥ al-Bārī* has also used both these terms as synonymous. In the book on Jurisprudence (Fiqh) this term has been used in the same sense. In such books, the word "*Sīra*", found in the chapters captioned "Jihād" and "*Sīra*" refer to Ghazawāt and Jihād injunctions.

   It continued to be so, for many centuries. Up to the third century, works designated as "*Sīra*" books, e.g., *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām, *Sīra* of Ibn 'Ā'id, *Sīra* of Amavī etc., generally give the description of Ghazawāt alone. Later on, however, books on "*Sīra*" dealt with other subjects also even to the exclusion of the Ghazawāt. In a *al-Mawāhib al-ladunniya* we find almost everything except Ghazawāt.

   On the other hand, the traditionists regard "*Sīra*" and "Maghāzī" as quite different from collections of Ḥadith. Later on, this distinction grew so pronounced that, in some cases, the authors of "*Sīra*" and "Maghāzī" were regarded as a group opposed to the traditionists. In controversies on certain incidents, one may see the entire class of *Sīra*-writers arrayed—

al-'Irāqī, in his book on "*Sīra*", says, "The student must know that books of "*Sīra*" (biography) contain facts faithfully reported and also those the authenticity of which is disputable".

← against the Imām al-Bukhārī and Muslim ; and there are people who would reject the statements of the Imām al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the ground that it is belied by writers of books on "*Sīra*". But critics declare that an authentically reported tradition deserves to be accepted, even though discredited by all the "*Sīra*"-writers unanimously. Let us cite a few instances here :

(i) Among the various Ghazawāt, there is a Ghazawa known as Ghazwa Dhi Qard (better read as Qarad). Compilers of "*Sīra*" place the date of its occurrence before the treaty of al-Ḥudaibiya. But in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim there is a report on the authority of Salama ibn Akwa' to the effect that this Ghazwa took place after the treaty of al-Ḥudaibiya and three days before the battle of Khaibar. 'Allāma al-Qurṭubī, in his comments on this report of Salama says, "The compilers of "*Sīra*" agreed in holding that Ghazwa of Dhi Qarad took place before the treaty of al-Ḥudaibiya. As for the report of Salama, it must have been the mere guess of some of its narrators". But Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-Ḥajar, discussing this view of al-Qurṭubi in his book *Fatḥ al-Bārī* says "All this leads us to conclude that the date of Ghazawa Dhi Qarad as mentioned in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* (of Muslim) is more authentic than the one mentioned by the biographers.

'Allāma al-Dimyāṭi was a famous traditionist. He wrote a book on "*Sīra*", which exists till this day. He preferred the writers of "*Sīra*" to the traditionists. But strict obedience to the "*Sīra*"-writers revealed to him the fact that authentic traditions were preferable to the statements of "*Sīra*"-writers. Then he wished to make necesary alterations in his book. Unfortunately, he could not do so, as the book had already reached the hands of numerous readers. This fact has been mentioned by the 'Allāma himself. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al Ḥajar, having quoted al-Dimyāṭī had made up his mind to change those passages wherein he had discredited Ḥadīth. He had, probably, made this mistake before attaining maturity as a scholar. He wanted to make necessary corrections in his book. But he could not do so as the book had already reached the hands of a large number of readers,

It is thus found that even in the most reliable books on "*Sīra*" there are incorporated many sayings that are weak. Consequently, it was necessary to collect a large number of books dealing with traditions and the lives of the narrators and then to compile a standard work based on thorough research and critical study. But to make a thorough study of hundreds of books and then to unearth the data was not a job for a single man. In addition to this,

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→ (ii) A similar controversy exists regarding the Ghazawa Dhāt al-Riqā'. Most of the biographers hold that it took place just before the battle of Khaibar. But the Imām al-Bukhārī states that it took place just after the battle of Khaibar. 'Allāma al-Dimyāṭi, however, differs with the view of al-Bukhārī. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar, in his book *Fatḥ al-Bārī* says: "As for al-Dimyāṭi, he has discussed this Ḥadith and declared it to be unreliable, because all the writers on "*Sīra*" had rejected it." (Vol. VII, p. 322.) Having referred to al-Dimyāṭī's view on this point, Ibn Ḥajar refuted this as well.

The substance of the discussion is that "*Sīra*" is a separate branch of learning, not identical with Ḥadīth. Hence, the writers of "*Sīra*" were not scrupulous about the authenticity of a report to the same degree as the collectors of traditions now found in books known as the *ṢIḤĀḤ SITTA*. To cite an analogy, Islamic Jurisprudence is all derived from the *Qur'ān* and Ḥadīth, yet it cannot be said that it is one and the same thing with them or that equals them in merit.

2. "Maghāzī" and "*Sīra*" require minute details, which, if judged by the strict criteria of Ḥadith, are not available. The writers on "*Sīra*" are thus compelled to relax their standards. Hence this branch of learning does not rank with Ḥadīth.

3. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim made it a point not to report a single saying of doubtful nature ; while the *Sīra*-writers never worked under such restrictions. There are scores of books by writers from the earliest to the present times, for instance, "*Sīra*" of Ibn Ishāq, *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām, *Sīra* of Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *Sīrà* of Dimyāṭī, al-*Mawāhib al-ladunniya*, etc. None of these writers has observed these restrictions.

It may now be seen what we meant when we said that no authentic book had so far been written on "*Sīra*", and how far it is correct.

a knowledge of what the Europeans have written about the Prophet was indispensable. I do not know any of the western languages ; hence the need of a whole department of translators ; having command over Arabic and western languages both. Now that God has provided these facilities, I have no excuse to make. Failure to discharge my duty now would mean the greatest ill-luck for me.

No personage in the annals of history had, or is ever likely to have, the facts of his life recorded with such comprehensiveness and scrupulous cares as the Prophet of Islam. This is the unique source of pride for the Muslims, and for this performance they shall stand unrivalled for all time to come. Thirteen thousand persons who had associated with or seen the Prophet have had their names and life-histories preserved. Can a more outstanding performance be imagined ; and it was all done at a time when writing had newly come into vogue ?

Tabaqāt of ibn Sa'd, *Kitāb al-Ṣaḥāba* by Ibn Sakan, *Kitāb* of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Alī, *Kitāb al-'Uqailī fī al-Ṣaḥāba. Kitāb* Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Kitāb* al-Azraq, *Kitāb al-Dawlābi, Kitāb al-Baghavī, Tabaqāt* Ibn Mākūla (also read as Muqla), *Usd al-ghāba, Istī'āb, Iṣāba fī aḥwāl al-Ṣaḥāba* and others, all deal with such persons.[1] What other hero in the world had the lives of so many of his companions penned down ?

In the following pages we propose to discuss the nature and history of the material collected by the earlier writers relating to the biography of the Prophet, in order to show how it is to be sifted and utilised.[2]

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1. All these books have been mentioned in the *Istī'āb.*

2. It must be borne in mind that, in books of Ḥadīth, one can find numerous notices of the Prophet's life, activities, habits, morals etc. They are immensely helpful to biographers, no doubt. But a full-fledged biography could not be compiled on the basis of these notices alone. Moreover, they lack chronological order. Collections of the Prophet's sayings form a separate literature in addition to the books mentioned above.

Early Biographies and the Written Material

Generally, it is held that reading and writing was not common among the Arabs, and the books first came to be written in the days of the 'Abbasid Caliph Abū Manṣūr, approximately in the year 143 A.H. (760 C.E.). Hence, the sayings of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him)and the accounts of his life, such as existed, were believed to have been preserved in the archives of memory, and not on paper. But such a superficial view is not warranted. Reading and writing, though limited to a few, had long been known to the Arabs.

In ancient days, the scripts familiar to the Arabs were known as Ḥimyarī and Nabaṭī (Himyarite and the Nabataean) ; and a large number of inscriptions in both have now been made available through the labour of European scholars. Shortly before the advent of Islam, another script was developed, which having gone through many changes is known as modern Arabic.

The history and origin of the present script is clouded in legends. For example, Ibn Nadīm has quoted al-Kalbī as saying that the men who devised the Arabic script were Abi Jad, Hawāz Ḥuṭṭī, Kalimūm, Sa'faṣ and Qurishat. Similar to this, there is also a statement from Ka'b, who says that Adam was the originator of all alphabets. Ibn Nadīm has again quoted from 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās that the first to introduce the Arabic script were three persons beloging to the tribe of Bawlān (an off-shoot of the tribe of Ṭai'), who lived in Anbār, their names were: Murāmir ibn Marwa, Aslam ibn Sadra and 'Āmir ibn Jadara.

Of all such stories, the only probable one seems to be the statement in 'Amr ibn Shabba's book *Akhbār Mecca* (quoted by ibn Nadīm) that the man who invented this script belonged to the tribe of Banū Yakhlud ibn Naḍr ibn Kināna. This probably took place at a time when the Quraish had gained ascendancy and were engaged in trade with the outside world. Ibn Nadīm says that in the library of Caliph Māmūm

al-Rashīd he had found a document written by 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim (grand-father of the Prophet), and it ran thus: "A certain Ḥimyarī (a Himyarite), resident of Ṣan'ā, owes to me, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim, resident of Mecca, one thousand Dirhams of silver, (weighed against iron). He will have to pay the same when called upon to do so; God and two angels stand witness to it".[1]

This document shows that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had loaned one thousand Dirhams to a certain person belonging to the Ḥimyar tribe; and that these people believed in angels (and probably in the KIRĀM al-KĀTIBĪN, i.e., the two recording angels). Ibn Nadīm has further observed that the hand in which this document was written looked like that of a female.

Al-Balādhurī says that, at that time when the Prophet entered upon his mission, seventeen persons among the Quraish knew reading and writing; and they were: 'Umar, 'Alī, 'Uthmān, Abū 'Ubaida, Ṭalḥa, Zaid, Abū Ḥudhaifa, Abū Sufyān, Shifā' bint 'Abd-Allāh and others.[2]

Among the prisoners from the Qruaish taken in the battle of Badr, which took place in the second year of the Hijra (623 C.E.) there were many who could not pay for their liberty; and the literate among them were ordered by the Prophet to teach at least ten illiterate Muslim children in lieu of cash payment. Zaid ibn Thābit, who later on became famous as one of the scribes of the Prophet's revelations, learned reading and writing in this way.[3]

These facts show that literacy had made some headway among the Meccans and Medinites, even in the days of the Prophet. Now it remains to be seen whether the followers of the Prophet noted down his sayings in his life-time and whether we have inherited from them any written material for a biography.

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1. Ibn Nadīm, Cairo Edition, p. 17.
2. *Futūḥ al-buldān*, European Edition, p. 471.
3. *Tabqāt* of Ibn Sa'd, p. 14.

Written Record Contemporary with the Prophet

There are sayings, some of which are to be found in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, which speak of the Prophet having ordered his Companions not to write down anything he said. The words of the report are:

"Write not from me anything; and whosoever has written anything from me, other than the *Qur'ān* should rub it out". But this seems to have been an order of early days, for there are several authentic sayings to prove that the Companions of the Prophet had his permission to write down whatever he said. Al-Bukhārī, in the chapter entitled "Knowledge", reports from Abū Huraira that, of all the Companions of the Prophet, none except 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar remembered so many sayings as he did, the reason being that 'Abd Allāh used to write down whatever the Prophet said, which he did not do. There is another report that 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar was in the habit of writing down every word uttered by the Prophet. Some people, the report adds, asked 'Abd Allāh not to do so, for sometimes the Prophet was displeased and sometimes in a happy mood. At this, 'Abd Allāh stopped writing; and later on reported the matter to the Prophet himself. The Prophet pointed to his lips and said, "Do write, for nothing but truth can escape from them".[1] Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, in his book *Taqyīd al-'ilm*, says that the book in which 'Abd Allāh had written down these sayings was named *Ṣādiqa*[2].

Once the Prophet ordered that the names of all those people who had embraced Islam by that time would be noted down; and the names of about 1,500 of his followers were recorded.[3]

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, in his book *Taqyīd al-'ilm*, again says that when the people gathered in a large number to

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1. Abū Dāwūd, Vol. ii, p. 77.
2. *Jāmi' bayān al-'ilm* by Ibn Abd al-Barr, p. 77.
3. Abū Dāwūd, Vol. 1, pp. 21 & 22.

hear Anas repeat the sayings of the Prophet, Anas used to take out a scroll of paper and say, "Here are the sayings that I had written down after I had heard them from the Prophet".

The Prophet sent many written orders concerning charity, Zakāt (poor-due) etc., to various tribes of Arabia ; and many of them are still preserved in books of Ḥadīth. In the same way the messages addressed by the Prophet to various kings and chiefs of Arabia and of other countries were also in writing.

The *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī (chapter Kitāb al-'Ilm), mentions that in the year when Mecca fell into the hands of the Muslims, it so happened that a certain person belonging to the tribe of Khuzā'a killed some other man. At this, the Prophet delivered a sermon while seated on a camel. A man, belonging to the territory of Yemen came and requested the Prophet to let him have a copy of the same in writing. The Prophet ordered a copy of the same sermon to be given to the man.

In short, by the time the Prophet died there was in existence the following material :—

(a) The sayings that 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar, Ibn 'Abbās, 'Alī, Anas and other Companions had preserved in writing,[1]

(b) Written orders, treaties (such as the Treaty of Ḥudaibiya) or the messages sent by the Prophet to various tribes.[2]

(c) Letters sent by the Prophet to various kings[3] and,

(d) Names of 1,500 (fifteen hundred) followers of the Prophet.[4]

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1. Al-Bukhārī, Vol. I, pp. 21 & 22.
2. *Sunan* of Ibn Mājah, p. 130, and Abū Dāwūd, Vol. I, pp. 155, 156.
3. Al-Bukhārī, Vol. I, pp. 5 - 15.
4. Ibid.

After the death of the Prophet this written material increased enormously. Before the advent of the 'Abbasids, just after the murder of Walīd ibn Yazīd, when books on traditions and sayings were transferred from the library of Walīd, those written by the Imām al-Zuhrī alone had to be carried on the backs of mules.[1]

Maghazi

The Arabs had no arts or sciences, but they loved to preserve the memory of their warlike deeds and tribal battles. It might therefore be expected that, of all the deeds and sayings of the Prophet, traditions concerning Maghāzī would be the first to gain popularity and prepare the grounds for this branch of knowledge. But this was not the case. Traditions concerning the military activities of the Prophet were the last to receive attention. The Khulafā' Rāshidūn (the righteous Caliphs, four in number, viz., Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī) and the elder Companions of the Prophet paid more attention to those sayings and doings of the Prophet that concerned the Sharī'a and on which Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh) could be based.

The Imām al-Bukhārī, while relating the battle of Uḥud, has quoted the words of Sā'ib ibn Yazīd, "I enjoyed the company of 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Auf, Ṭalḥa, Ibn 'Ubaid Allāh, Miqdād and Sa'd for a long time. Still I never heard them quoting from the Holy Prophet, except that Ṭalḥa used to relate the incidents of the battle of Uḥud".

The Companions of the Prophet named above, are very well known and have reported a large number of sayings from him. The quotation given above may only mean that the elder Companions of the Prophet desisted from relating the Ghazwāt, except Ṭalḥa, who often spoke of Uḥud. It was on this account that the writers who devoted themselves to Maghāzī (military history) though very popular with the

1. *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, Description of Imam al-Zuhrī, by Dhahabi.

masses, carried little weight in the eyes of the learned. Ibn Isḥāq and al-Wāqidī are regarded as authorities on this subject; of whom al-Wāqidī is declared by the traditionists to have been a perfect liar. Ibn Isḥāq passes, with some of the traditionists for a reliable man; but others of equal authority do not regard him as worthy of trust. We shall discuss this in some detail later on.

The Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, in the *Mauḍū'āt* of Mullā Qārī, is reported as saying: "There are three kinds of writings that have no basis, viz., Maghāzī, Malāhim (war-strategy) and Tafāsīr or commentaries of the *Qur'ān*".[1] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, having quoted these words says that, while making this remark, the Imām Aḥmad must have had in his mind those books in particular that were really baseless. He further says, "As regards the Tafāsīr, the books by al-Kalbī and Muqātil ibn Sulaimān are widely known. But the Imām Ḥanbal has said that the commentary by al-Kalbī is a monument of lies from the beginning to the end".

He further remarks: "As regards the Maghāzī literature the most famous book is the work of Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, who borrows freely from the Christians and the Israelites; and the Imām al-Shāfi'ī has declared the books by al-Wāqidī to be full of lies".

In spite of all distinction, it was impossible to ignore this branch of literature. Hence the elder Companions and traditionists were very careful and narrated only such facts as they were quite sure of.

Written Literature Under State Patronage

In the days of the first Four Caliphs, Islamic jurisprudence and traditions were widely studied. They were also taught by a number of teachers. All this was however, done, orally; and nothing was reduced to writing. The Umayyads were the first to order Muslim scholars to write.

1. *Mauḍū'āt* of Mullā 'Alī Qārī, Mujtabā'ī Press, p. 85.

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, in his book *Jāmi' bayān al-'ilm*, has quoted the Imām al-Zuhrī as saying: "We did not like to transfer knowledge to paper, but at last a time came when men in authority compelled us to do so."[1]

Amīr Mu'āwiya was the first to encourage writings. He invited 'Ubaid ibn Ṣharya to come from Yemen and compile a history of the ancients. The book is named *Akhbār al-Mādiyīn*.[2]

Next to Amīr Mu'āwiya came 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, who ascended the throne in the year 65 A.H. (684 C.E.). He ordered the scholars to write books of every type and on every topic. Sa'īd ibn Jubair, the greatest scholar of the day, was ordered to write a Tafsīr (commentary of the *Qur'ān*). This the Imām did, and the Tafsīr was deposited in the state library. The Tafsīr considered to have been written by 'Aṭā' ibn Dīnār is the same that Sa'īd had written. 'Aṭā' had, somehow, secured it from the royal library.[3]

The reign of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz gave a fresh impetus to literary activity. Orders were promulgated all over the empire for sayings of the Prophet to be compiled into the form of books. Sa'd ibn Ibrāhīm, who was a famous traditionist and the Qāḍī of Medīna, was asked to write into books a very large number of traditions; and they were all sent to various parts of the Muslim empire. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, in his book *Jāmi' bayān al-'ilm*, quotes Ibn Ibrāhīm as saying: "Umar ibn 'Abd al-Azīz ordered us to collect the traditions. We did so and wrote a large number of volumes; and 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz sent one set to each of the various parts of his empire."[4]

Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Amr ibn Ḥazm Anṣārī (also ibn Ḥidm Anāṣrī), the Qāḍī of Medina who was a

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1. *Jāmi' bayān al-'ilm*, Cairo Edition., p. 136.
2. *Fihrist* of Ibn Nadīm, p. 244.
3. *Mīzān al-I'tidāl*, 'Aṭā ibn Dīnār's version,
4. *Jāmi' baynā al-'ilm*, Cairo Edition, p. 36.

renowned traditionist of his time and the teacher of the famous Imām al-Zuhrī, was also ordered to compile books on traditions.[1]

Traditions Quoted by 'A'isha

The traditions quoted by 'Ā'isha occupy a unique place of their own. A large number of traditions handed down by her are those that bear upon the fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence. It was on account of this that 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz paid special attention to the sayings quoted by her. 'Amra bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān was a lady who had been brought up by 'Ā'isha herself. She was very learned, and she remembered a large number of sayings. All the Muslim scholars agree that none knew the traditions reported by 'Ā'isha more than 'Amra. 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz wrote to Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad to collect and put into writing all the traditions reported by 'Amra and send them to him.[2]

Special Attention paid to Maghazi.

So far little attention had been paid to Maghāzī and *Sīra*[3]. 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ordered that people should be taught and trained in this branch of knowledge in schools specially run for this purpose. 'Āṣim ibn 'Umar ibn Qatāda al-Anṣārī (d. 121 A.H.—738-39 C.E.) was well versed in *Sīra* and Maghāzī. He was ordered by 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz to start a school in the mosque of Damascus for imparting lessons in Maghāzī and Manāqib (Eulogies in praise of the Prophet and his Companions).

The Imam al-Zuhri.

It was in these days that the Imām al-Zuhrī wrote a

1. *Tabaqāt* of Ibn Sa'd, Vol. II, p. 134.
2. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 134 ; and *Tahthib al-tahthib*, version of Abū Bakr Ibn Muḥammad.
3. It is to be noted that books dealing with Maghāzī and *Sīra* naturally cover much common ground. They may, however be distinguished by the conspicuity they give to the one or the other—Translator.

book on Maghāzī; and, as the Imām al-Suhailī, in his book *Rauḍ al-unuf* has remarked, this was the first book on the subject. The Imām al-Zuhrī was the most learned scholar of the time, none being his equal in Fiqh and Ḥadīth. He was the grand-teacher of the Imām al-Bukhārī, the famous traditionist. He took enormous pains to collect traditions, visited the house of each Anṣārī, enquired of all he could meet, young or old, man or woman——even such as lived in seclusion; and tried to pen down all that they knew about the Holy Prophet.[1] He himself belonged to the tribe of the Quraish, was born in the year 50 A.H. (670 C.E.); and had seen many of the Companions of the Prophet. In the year 80 A.H. (701 C.E.) he reached the court of 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, where he was received with great honour. Most probably he wrote his famous book *al-Maghāzī* at the instance of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz. It is worth noting that he was closely connected with the court. Hisḥām ibn 'Abd al-Malik entrusted him with the education of his children. He died in the year 124 A.H. (741 C.E.).

Disciples of the Imam al-Zuhri

As a result of the endeavours of al-Zuhrī people started taking interest in Maghāzī, and, among the large number of his pupils, there were many who rose to eminence in this field of literature, such as Ya'qūb ibn Ibrāhīm, Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz. Accordingly, the *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, when speaking of any of them, appends the words "Ṣāḥib al-Maghāzī" (master of the Maghāzī) as a mark of respect and distinction.

Two of his pupils tower high above the rest—and they are also the ones who close the line of writings on this subject —and they are Mūsā ibn 'Uqbah and Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq.

Musa ibn 'Uqba

Mūsā ibn 'Uqba had been a slave of the Zubair family

1. *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, version of Ibn al-Zukrī.

and had seen 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar living. In Ḥadith, the Imām Mālik had been his pupil and held him in such high regard that he used to advise others to learn Maghāzī from none but Mūsā. The chief characteristics of his writings are :

(a) The writers of Maghāzī had cared little for the authenticity of traditions. But Mūsa usually did that.

(b) Generally, authors delighted in amassing as many facts as they came to know. As a result, all sorts of reports, spurious as well as genuine, found way into their writings. Mūsā made a careful scrutiny and incorporated only those reports that he found to be correct. Hence his work is much less voluminous than the other books on Maghāzī.

(c) There was no age limit and anybody could attend the lessons of a teacher ; and pass on to others what he had learnt. But it was difficult for an immature mind to understand the actual meaning and implications of traditions at a tender age. Much confusion was therefore created when such youths quoted traditions to others.

Contrary to others, Mūsā learnt the subject in his old age.[1] He died in 141 A.H. (758 C.E.). Mūsā's work is not extant, but it was available for a very long time, and numerous references to it are to be found in all the old books on *Sīra* and Maghāzī.

Muhammad ibn Ishaq

He is the most famed writer of Maghāzī and is recognised as the highest authority. Al-Wāqidī alone can match him as a well-known author ; but al-Wāqidī is notorious for his absurd and baseless reports and his is a negative reputation. Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq on the other hand, being a Ṭābi'ī, had seen one of the Companions of the Prophet, namely Anas. He was well-versed in the Ḥadīth literature.

1. *Tāhdhīb al-tahdhīb*, version of Mūsā Ibn 'Uqba.

Al-Imām al-Zuhrī kept a watchman at his door and none could enter his house unannounced. For Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, however, there was no such restriction and he had free access to him at any time. As regards the reliability of Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, opinions differ. Al-Imām Mālik is doubtful about his veracity and does not consider him to be dependable at least in the field of Maghāzī and *Sīra*. The Imām al-Bukhārī did not incorporate in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* any tradition quoted by Muḥammad, yet he drew upon him in the chapter "al-Qirā'a" (Recitation). In books of history, we find quite a large number of facts borrowed from his book. His pen made the Maghāzī literature so popular and interesting that even the 'Abbasid Caliphs, who were more interested in other branches of knowledge, took a fancy to it. Ibn 'Adī has acknowledged his special services, saying that no other work on *Sīra* and Maghāzī could equal the one by Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq.[1]

In his book *al-Thiqāt*, Ibn Ḥibbān says that the main charge against Muḥammad ibn Isḥaq was that, while describing the battle of Khaibar and other battles, he incorporated reports that he had heard from the Jews converted to Islam. As these facts must have been reported to the converts by the Jews, their reliability was questionable. Al-Dhahabī also declares that Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq reported facts borrowed from the Jews and the Christians, whom unfortunately, he considered as reliable. He died in the year 151 A.H. (768 C.E.). Abū Bakr Sa'd Zangī ordered his book to be translated into Persian in the days of Sheikh Sa'dī, of which I had the opportunity of seeing a manuscript copy at Allahabad.

Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq's work had a wide publicity and many famous traditionists edited it. Ibn Hishām brought out a very elaborate and enlarged edition, known as *Sīra*

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1. *Tahdhib al-tahdhīb*, version of Muḥammad Ibn Isḥāq.

Ibn Hishām. As the original book of Ibn Isḥāq is rarely available, its successor, *Sīra Ibn Hishām* remains as a relic of the original work.

Ibn Hisham

His name was 'Abd al-Malik, and he was a very reliable traditionist and historian. He belonged to the Himyarite tribe, and it was, perhaps, for this reason that he wrote a history of the Himyarite dynasty, which exists even today. His additional contribution to biographical literature consists of clarifications of the difficult words that occur in books on *Sīra.* He died in the year 213 A.H. (823 C.E.).

The popularity of the *Sīra Ibn Hishām* persuaded writers to put it in verse. Abū Naṣr Fatḥ ibn Mūsā Khudrāvī (d. 633 A.H.——1264 C.E.), 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Aḥmad, better known as Sa'd Vīrī (d. 607 A.H.——1210 C.E.), Abū Isḥāq al-Anṣārī, al-Tilisumānī and Fatḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm, known as ibn al-Shahīd (d. 793 A.H.——1390 C.E.) brought out versified editions. The last named author's work contains some 10,000 lines and is entitled *Fatḥ al-gharīb fī sīrat al-Ḥabīb.*

Ibn Sa'd

Al-Wāqidī himself deserves no notice, but his disciple, Ibn Sa'd, produced so comprehensive and detailed a book on the lives of the Holy Prophet and his Companions that it stands unrivalled even today. He was a famous traditionist, and though, according to some traditionists, his teacher al-Wāqidī does not deserve any consideration. Ibn Sa'd may be relied upon. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī had remarked of him: "He (Ibn Sa'd) was an eminent scholar and had an unbiased mind. He has compiled a book dealing with the lives of the Companions of the Prophet, and of those who followed them, bringing the narrative to his own day. It is an excellent and beautiful performance.[1]

1. *Tahdhib al-tahdhib*, version of Muḥammad Ibn Sa'd.

Ibn Sa'd belonged to the tribe allied to the Banū Hāshim. Born in the town of Basra, he had taken up his residence at Baghdād. The famous historian al-Balādhurī was his pupil. He died in 230 A.H. (844 C.E.) at the age of sixty-two.

Ibn Sa'd's work is entitled *Tabaqāt*. It has eight volumes, two dealing with the life of the Prophet and the rest with the lives of the Companions. As the lives of the Companions contain numerous references to the Prophet, these parts also form a valuable source for the Prophet's biography.

Ibn Sa'd's work had become almost untraceable in as much as no library had a complete set, when the German Emperor thought of its publication, donating a lakh of rupees (approximately U.S. dollars 11,111 at the present rate of exchange) from his personal purse. Professor Sachau was entrusted with the task of procuring from various places the various parts of the book. Sachau travelled to Constantinople, Egypt and to other countries, and succeeded in collecting all the volumes. Twelve European professors took upon themselves the onerous duty of correcting the volumes allotted to each ; and thus came out this valuable book from a press in Leyden (Holland) carefully edited and printed. Much of this book is based on al-Wāqidī but all the reports having been referred to the sources, those originating from al-Wāqidī can be easily separated from the rest.

Several other books on *Sīra* were also written during this period ; and books like *Kashf al-Ẓunūn* mention their names. But we know nothing more about them now. They are no longer extant and so we needn't worry about them.

Tarikh Kabir and Tarikh Saghir by Imam Bukhari

In addition to the books on *Sīra*, there are historical writings following models of the traditionists, that is, recording statements with reference to sources. These works, too,

at least the portions dealing with the life of the Prophet, form a part of the *Sira* literature. Of these the foremost, and at once the most authentic, are the two books of the Imām al-Bukhārī. But unfortunately both are brief. One of these, the *Ta'rīkh Ṣaghīr*, has now been published. This book does not devote more than a tenth of its space to the life of the Prophet, the topic covering only fifteen pages: and this, too, not in an orderly way. The *Ta'rīkh Kabīr* is fairly voluminous, and I saw a copy of it in a library at the mosque of Āya Ṣūfiah. But the account of the Prophet's life is short, and scattered here and there.

Ibn Jarir Al-Tabari

Among books of historical character, an authentic and very comprehensive book is that of the Imām al-Ṭabarī, known as *Ta'rīkh Kabīr*. Al-Ṭabarī is a writer whose scholarly attainments and whose sure and extensive knowledge are unanimously recognised by the traditionists. His commentary is by far the best of all the commentaries. The well-known traditionist, Ibn Khuzaima, says that he knew no man more learned than al-Ṭabarī. Al-Ṭabarī died in the year 310 A.H.—921 C.E. Some traditionists, al-Sulaimānī in particular, have remarked that al-Ṭabarī coined traditions for the Shī'a. Regarding this charge against al-Ṭabarī, 'Allāma al-Dhahabī, in his *Mīzān al-i'tidāl*, says :

> "This is an allegation based on false misgivings. The fact is that Ibn Jarīr is one of the most trust-worthy Imām".

'Allāma al-Dhahabī has further remarked that, although Jarīr was inclined towards the Shī'a sect, his Shī'ism was harmless. All the authentic and comprehensive books of history, such as *al-Ta'rīkh al-kāmil* and those written by Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Khuldūn, Abual-Fidā' etc., are based on his work and abridged from it. Al-Ṭabarī's work, too, was almost unavailable; and we owe much to the European scholars who put it in print.

Below we give a concise list of the reliable works and authors on the *Sīra* :[1]

'Urwa ibn Zubair (d. 94 A.H.——712 C.E.)

He was the son of Zubair and a grand-son of Abū Bakr on mother's side, was brought up by 'Ā'isha and is the source of a good deal of information on *Sīra* and Maghāzī. 'Allāma al-Dhahabī, in his *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ*, says that he was learned in *Sīra*. The author of the *Kashf al-Ẓunūn* says that some people consider his book to be the first on the subject.

Al-Sha'bi (d. 109 A.H.——727 C.E.)

He was a great traditionist and had full mastery over various sciences. He acted as ambassador of the Umayyad Caliph at Constantinople. He knew so much of Maghāzī and *Sīra* that 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar once remarked ; "Though I was myself present at three Ghazwāt, his knowledge of them is far greater than mine".

Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. 114 A.H.——732 C.E.)

He belonged to a non-Arab family of Yemen and had heard some traditions from Abū Huraira. Prophecies about the advent of the Prophet, as found in ancient books, are mostly narrated by him.

'Asim ibn 'Umar ibn Qatada al-Ansari (d. 121 A.H.——738 C.E.)

He was one of the well-known Tābi'ūn, i.e., had been a contemporary of some of the Companions. He narrated traditions from Anas, from his mother Ramiya and from

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1. The works of almost all these writers are not available. Quotations from them very often occur in other books on *Sīra*. We have taken these details from the *Tahdhīb al-tahdhib*, so as to enable our readers to see how far they can be relied upon.

his father. He had an extensive knowledge of *Sīra* and Maghāzī, and taught the subjects in the mosque of Damascus under orders from 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz.

Muhammad ibn Muslim ibn Shihab al-Zuhri (d. 124 A.H.—— 741 C.E.)

Already spoken of.

Ya'qub bin 'Utba ibn Mughira ibn al-Akhnas ibn Shuraiq al-Thaqafi. (d. 128 A.H.——745 C.E.)

He was a highly reliable traditionist. Governors and state officials sought his advice in administrative affairs. He was reputed to be one of the jurists of Medina and a scholar of *Sīra*. His grand-father had been one of the deadliest enemies of the Prophet.

Musa ibn 'Uqba (d. 141 A.H.——758 C.E.)

Already mentioned.

Hashim ibn 'Urwa ibn Zubair (d. 146 A.H. 763 C.E.)

He quoted traditions, generally from his father. He was a pupil of the Imām al-Zuhrī, and was considered one of the learned men of Medina. Some traditionists hold that the traditions collected by him at Baghdād were not carefully scrutinised. A vast number of traditions he traced back, through his father, to 'Ā'isha. He had many famous and illustrious pupils.

Muhammad ibn Ishaq ibn Yasar. (d. 150 A.H.——767 C.E.)

Already spoken of.

Ma'mar ibn Rashid al-Azdi. (d. 152 A.H.——769 C.E.)

Among the disciples of the Imām al-Zuhrī, his name stands second to that of al-Imām Mālik. He was one of the architects of the science of Ḥadīth. He left a work on

Maghāzī, which Ibn Nadīm reports to have been named *al-Maghāzī*.

'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Abd al-Aziz al-Ausi. (d. 162 A.H.——778 C.E.)

He was a disciple of the Imām al-Zuhrī. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, only one tradition has been quoted on his authority : and he is not considered reliable by traditionists. He was well-versed in *Sīra* : and Ibn Sa'd calls him a great scholar of *Sīra* and other sciences.

Muhammad ibn Salih ibn Dinar al-Tammar (d. 168 A.H.——784 C.E.)

He too was a disciple of the Imām al-Zuhrī, and was the teacher of al-Wāqidī. Ibn Sa'd says he was a scholar of *Sīra* and Maghāzī. Many traditionists hold him to be trustworthy. Abū al-Dannād, who was himself a great traditionist, says that if one wanted to learn the science of Maghāzī one must learn it from Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ.

Abu Ma'shar Najih al-Madani (d. 170 A.H.——786 C.E.)

He was a disciple of Hāshim ibn 'Urwa. Al-Thaurī and al-Wāqidī have quoted from him. Though regarded by the traditionists as being a weak reporter so far as traditions are concerned, yet in the sphere of Maghāzī and *Sīra*, they regard him as a high ranking scholar. Al-Imām Ḥanbal says that he had a deep insight into the science of *Sīra*. Ibn Nadīm has mentioned his book *al-Maghāzī*. His name frequently appears in *Sīra* literature.

'Abd Allah ibn Ja'far ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Makhzumi (d. 170 A.H.——786 C.E.)

He was the great grand-son of al-Miswar ibn Makhrama, a Companion of the Prophet. He held a high position as a traditionist and was regarded as a learned scholar of *Sīra*.

Ibn Sa'd remarks that among the Medinites he was a great scholar of Maghāzī.

'Abd al-Malik ibn Abi Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn 'Amr ibn Hazm (d. 176 A.H.——792 C.E.)

His family has been well-known for their knowledge of *Sīra* and traditions. It was his grand-father who, under orders of the Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, first compiled traditions in book form. One of his paternal grand-mothers, 'Amra, had been brought up by 'Ā'isha. He was himself deeply read both in Maghāzī and in *Sīra*. He received his education from his father and uncle. The Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd appointed him a Qāḍī ; and he taught the people the science of Maghāzī. He was also the author of a work known as *al-Maghāzī*.

'Ali ibn Mujahid al-Razi al-Kindi (d. 180.A.H.——796 C. E.)

He was a disciple of Abū Ma'shar. Al-Imām Ḥanbal has quoted from him. He is a good writer on Maghāzī. But some critics do not value his work as reliable.

Ziyad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Tufail al-Bakha'i (or al-Bakka) (d. 183 A.H.——799 C.E.)

He was a disciple of Ibn Isḥāq and the teacher of ibn Hishām and thus forms a link between these two great scholars. His love for the knowledge of *Sīra* led him to sell off his property and take to a wandering life in the company of his teacher, with whom he remained for a considerable period of time. In the eyes of the traditionists he carries little weight, but the writers on *Sīra* hold him in high regard as the most reliable reporter.

Salama ibn al-Fadl al-Abrash al-Ansari (d. 191 A.H.—809E.)

He was a disciple of Ibn Isḥāq, and quoted from him very often. He was the Qāḍī of Rai. Critics declare him to be unworthy of being quoted. But Ibn Ma'īn, himself

authority on the science of Rijāl (biographies of the reporters of the Prophet's sayings) confirms his claims to reliability and holds the books written by him to be the best writings on *Sīra*. Al-Ṭabarī has quoted from him very often.

Abu Muhammad Yahya ibn Sa'id ibn Aban al-Umawi (d. 194 A.H.—809 C.E.)

He was the disciple of Hāshim ibn 'Urwa and Ibn Jarīḥ. Ibn Sa'd says that, though he did not quote many traditions, yet he is dependable. The author of the *Kashf al-Ẓunūn* has mentioned him as one of the writers on Maghāzī.

Walid ibn Muslim al-Qurashi (d. 195 A.H.——810 C.E.)

He was a famous Syrian traditionists, possessed of a fine memory, and excelled all his contemporary scholars in Syria. He was regarded as far superior to al-Wāqidī, as far as Maghāzī and history are concerned. The number of books written by him is about seventy, one of which is *al-Maghāzī*. There is mention of this book in *al-Fihrist* of Ibn Nadīm.

Yunus ibn Bukair (d. 199 A.H.——814 C.E.)

He was a disciple of Hishām ibn 'Urwa and Ibn Isḥāq. As a narrator of traditions, he occupies a place of mediocrity. Al-Dhahabī, in his *Tadkhira* calls him "Ṣāḥib al-Maghāzī" ; and many other traditionists have confirmed his reliability. He wrote marginal annotations on the books of Ibn Isḥāq (vide *Zurqani Mawāhib*, Vol. III, p. 10).

Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Waqidi al-Aslami (d. 207 A.H.—822 C.E.)

On *Sīra* he has written two books, *Kitāb al-Sīra* and *Kitāb al-Ta'rīkh wal-maghāzī wal mab'ath*. Al-Imām al-Shāfi'i says that the books written by al-Wāqidī are nothing but heaps of lies. Many baseless traditions found in books of

Sīra may be traced back to his work. A witty traditionist once remarked that al-Wāqidī was a man of truth, then there was none in the world as truthful as he ; and if he was a liar, the world had never produced so great a liar.

Ya'qub ibn Ibrahim al-Zuhri. (d. 208 A.H.—823 C.E.)

He was a descendant of 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Auf and was a disciple of the Imām al-Zuhrī. In Maghāzī he occupied so high a place that eminent critics of Rijāl, like Ibn Ma'īn, took their lessons from him.

'Abd al-Razzaq ibn Hammam ibn Nafi' al-Himyari (d. 211 A.H.—826 C.E.)

He is regarded as a reliable traditionist. He had leanings towards Shi'ism. Ibn Ma'īn says that even if 'Abd al-Raḥmān became an apostate, they could not stop reporting traditions from him. In his late life he lost his sight ; and so traditions narrated during this period are not so dependable. He has left a work on Maghāzī.

'Abd al-Malik ibn Hisham al-Himyari (d. 213 or 218 A.H.—828 or 833 C.E.)

He has previously been mentioned.

'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Madyani (d. 255 A.H.—839 C.E.)

He was a disciple of Abū Ma'shar Najiḥ, Salama ibn Faḍl and others. He had a wide knowledge of the history and the genealogies of Arab tribes. He is not reckoned as a traditionist, but he is regarded as a most eminent historian. He is the source of the voluminous writings of *Aghānī*. He wrote a large number of books on history and genealogy. His book on *Sīra* is a detailed work, which, as remarked by Ibn Nadīm, has been arranged under all sorts of multifarious headings.

'Umar ibn Shubba al-Basri (d. 262 A.H —875 C.E.)

He was a prominent scholar of history, Ḥadīth, lexicons,

poetry and grammar. He wrote history of Mecca as well as those of Medina and Baṣra. His place in biography is very high. Ibn Mājah in Ḥadith, and, in history al-Balādhurī and Abū Nu'aim were his disciples.

Muhammad ibn 'Isa Tirmidhi (also pronounced as Turmudhī, and Tarmadhī) (d. 279 A.H.—892 C.E.)

He is considered to be one of the most famous traditionists. His book of traditions occupies the third place among the Six Authentic Books of traditions known as the *Ṣiḥāḥ Sitta*. Another work by him is *al-Shamā'il*, in which he has described the personal life, habits and character of the Holy Prophet. He took utmost care to incorporate only genuine and reliable traditions. Many scholars have written commentaries and annotations on it.

Ibrahim ibn Ishaq ibn Ibrahim (d. 285 A.H.—898 C.E.)

He, too, is regarded as one of the most outstanding traditionists. His book is entitled *Musnad Ṣaḥāba*, to which is appended the *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*.

Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Abi Khaithama al-Baghdadi (d. 299 A.H.—911 C.E.)

He learned Ḥadith from the Imām Ḥanbal and Ibn Ma'īn. He was a learned scholar of *Sīra* and history. His most famous work is known as *Ta'rīkh Kabīr* which included a portion dealing with the life of the Prophet.

Muhammad ibn 'A'idh of Damascus

His book on Maghāzī is regarded as a reliable work. His authority is very often quoted by men like al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar.

These were the earliest writers. Now we give a short list of books by later writers, based on the older Ḥadīth literature and the books mentioned above. It mentions also

the books written as commentaries on the older works. We include them as they are in themselves regular works. They have also a good deal of matter not to be found even in the original books.

Raud al-Unuf

A commentary on the book of Ibn Isḥāq, written by 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suhaili, who died in the year 581 A.H.—1185 C.E. Al-Suhaili was among the leading traditionists and almost all the later writers on *Sīra* borrow from him. The author, in the preface, has claimed that he had compiled this work with the help of 120 books. A manuscript copy of this book is in use with us. (Printed in Cairo, 1911).

Sira of al-Dimyati

Written by al-Ḥāfiẓ 'Abd al-Mu'min al-Dimyāṭī (d. 705 A.H.—1305 C.E.). References to this *Sīra* are frequently found in other works. The full title of the book is *al-Mukhtaṣar fī Sīrati Sayyid Khair al-Bashar*. It contains some 100 pages. There is a MS copy of this book in the Patna library. (Catalogue, XV. 1007).

Sira of al-Khilati

Written by 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Khilāṭī Ḥanafī (d. 708 A.H.—1308 C.E.)

Sira of al-Gazaruni

Written by Sheikh Ẓahīr al-Dīn ibn Muḥammad Gāzarūnī (d. 694 A.H.—1294 C.E.).[1]

Sira of al-Mughlata'i (d. 762 A.H.—1361 C.E.)

This is a famous book and has been published in Egypt.

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1. The library attached to the Jum'a Mosque, Bombay, has a manuscript copy of this work.

Al-'Allāma al-'Ainī has written on part of it a commentary known by the name of *Kashf al-lithām*.[1]

Sharaf al—Mustafa

By al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Sa'īd 'Abd al-Malik of Nīshāpūr (d. 406/1015). The book consists of eight volumes. Ibn Ḥajar has largely quoted from this book in his *Iṣāba*; but some of the quotations cited by him are absurd and ridiculous. This shows that the author was not particular about making his selection of reports.

Sharaf al—Mustafa. (*Uyūn al-ḥikāyāt fi sirat Sayyid al-bariyya*).

By al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Jauzi. (d. 957 A.H.—1201 C-E.).

Iktifa' fi Maghazi al-Mustafa wal-Khulafa al-Thalatha.

This book was compiled by Abū Rabi' Sulaimān ibn Mūsā al-Kalā'ī. (d. 634 A.H.—1237 C.E.), ed. H. Masse, Algeria, 1931. Many later writers have often quoted from this book.

Sira of Ibn 'Abd al-Barr

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr was a famous traditionist of his days. Quotations from this book are found in many other books.

'Uyun al-Athar, by Sayyid al-Nas (d. 734 A.H.—1334 C.E.)

The author was a famous scholar of Spain. This book is a sober and comprehensive work. Quotations have been made from most authentic books, and sources indicated. A manuscript copy of this book is to be found in the Calcutta library; and is in our use. (Published Damascus, A.H. 1358).

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1. *Kashaf al-ẓunūn*, under the heading "*Sīra*" mentions all these books.

Nur al-Nibras fi Sirat Sayyid al-Nas

This is a commentary on the book of Sayyid al-Nās, mentioned above. The name of the author is Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad. The book has been written after much research work. It contains valuable information and consists of two big volumes. There is a very fine copy of it in the library of Nadwah, India.

Sira Manzuma

Written by Zain al-Din 'Irāqi, who was the teacher of Ibn Ḥajar. This book is in verse, and the author has stated in the introduction that it contains all sorts of matter, whether reliable or otherwise.

Al-Mawahib al-ladunniya

It is the well-known work by Qasṭallāni (d. 923/1517), who is also famous as a commentator of al-Bukhārī. He ranks with Ibn Ḥajar. The later writers have mostly relied on his authority. This book is, no doubt, exhaustive, but contains at the same time thousands of fabricated and false reports. (Printed in Istanbul A.H. 1261).

Al-Zurqani 'ala al-mawahib

This is a commentary by al-Zurqānī on *al-Mawāhib al-ladunniya*, mentioned above. In fact, no book except that of al-Suhaili was ever written with as much care and caution as this. It runs into eight volumes and has already come out from a press in Egypt (A.H. 1325-28).

Al-Sirat al-Halabiya.

It is a book we are all familiar with and is much in use. (Printed in Būlaq A.H. 1292, Cairo A.H. 1304)

Authenticity of the Sources

The events of the life of the Holy Prophet were first put into writing almost a hundred years after his death. Hence the writers had no written sources to fall back upon except memorized traditions.

In a similar situation, when facts have to be recorded long after their occurrence, people generally pick up all sorts of street gossip, without ever caring to know even the names of the reporters. At the most, out of a worthless heap of hearsay, a selection is made in the light of circumstances or on grounds of probability. Shortly after, this worthless collection passes for a piece of interesting historical literature. European history is a collection of this type of material.

The Islamic Method of Judging the Narrators

Muslims alone, among the nations of the world, may claim the credit of having established a far superior standard of writing history. The first principle the Muslim historians laid down was that the incidents to be incorporated should be such as have been reported by a person who has personally witnessed the affair. If this is not the case, the name of all the intermediaries have to be serially mentioned up to the man who had been an actual participator or eye-witness. The important thing was to see the type of persons the reporters were, what calling they followed, what character they bore, how they stood in the matter of memory and judgement, and whether they were reliable or untrustworthy, had a keen intellect or a shallow mind, were well-informed or ignorant. It was almost impossible, to know all these details. Still, hundreds of workers in the field devoted their lives to this arduous task. They went from door to door, travelled from place to place, met persons who had anything to narrate, and gathered all possible information regarding their life and character. If the person had been dead, en-

quiries were made from those who had known him when living.

Asma al-Rijal

These enquiries gave birth to a new branch of knowledge known as "Asma' al-Rijāl" (Biographies of the narrators of the Prophet's sayings.) To this colossal store-house we are indebted for exhaustive information with respect to at least a hundred thousand narrators; and, if the opinion of Sprenger is to be accepted, to not less than five times than that number.[1]

These traditionists, without being influenced by the position or status of a man, gathered all relevant information, detected the innermost moral weaknesses and laid bare every shortcoming, sparing neither kings nor religious heads. Thus, hundreds of books were written, of which we give a brief description here :—

The first book on the subject, i.e., on the critical study of the lives of the narrators, was written by Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān (d. A.H. 198). He was a scholar of such a high calibre that a man like the Imām Ibn Ḥanbal said of him: "Never have I seen the like of him". After Yaḥyā this branch of knowledge gained wide popularity and many books

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Remarks apparently too sweeping, but hardly questionable, where original documentary evidence does not exist. In fact, with respect to early times, post-date recording of historical events without scrutinising and naming the source for each piece of information has been the rule with all the other people ; and Europeans are not the only sinners in this respect. (Translator)

A famous German orientalist, who served at the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, for a long time. A. G. Sprenger brought out the edition of the book *Iṣāba*. In its preface, he says that he had found no other nation having developed so splendid a branch of knowledge as the Asmā' al-Rijāl. He has further remarked that it was owing to this development that we get exhaustive knowledge of about 500,000 narrators.

were produced. A few of the most prominent among them are :

Rijal 'Uqaili (called, *Kitab al-ḍu'afā*)

It dealt specially with the narrators whose reliability was questionable.

The author died in A.H. 322—934C.E.

Rijal Ahmad (d. 216 A.H.—874 C.E.)

The full name of the book was "*al-Jarḥ wal-ta'dīl.*" (Scrutiny and Criticism).

Rijal al-Imam 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Hatim al-Razi (d. 327 A.H.—939 C.E.)

It is a voluminous book (Printed in Hyderabad A.H. 1354).

Al-Kamil of Ibn 'Adi

It was the most famous book on the subject. Later traditionists have all drawn from it as their main source (for a copy see Top Kāpu, A. iii. 2943).

Rijal of al-Daraqutni

Al-Imām al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385 A.H.—995 C.E.) was a well-known traditionist. The book deals particularly with the weak narrators (ed. Wajahat Husain, 1934).

Most of these books are now no longer available. Later writings based on them are, however, available.

The most comprehensive and authentic work in this category is *Tahdhīb al-kamāl* by al-Mizzī Yūsuf ibn al-Zakı (d. 742 A.H.—1341 C.E.). 'Alā' al-Dın Mughlaṭā'ī (d. 762 A.H.—1361 C.E.) completed it in thirteen volumes. Al-Dhahabī (d. 748 A.H.—1347 C.E.) brought out a compressed and abridged version of this book. Many other traditionists also produced its abridged versions or companion-books.

Based on this material, Ibn Ḥajar at last compiled a voluminous work, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* running into twelve volumes. It has recently been published from Hyderabad Deccan (India). The author remarks that it took him eight years to compile it. Another popular work in this line is the *Mīzān al-i'tidāl* by Al-Dhahabī, to which Ibn Ḥajar has made further additions in his book *Lisān al-Mīzān*.

Books on Rijal Consulted by Us

Of these sources we have made use of the following books :—

Tahdhīb al-kamāl,
Tahdīb al-tahdhīb,
Lisān al-Mīzān,
Taqrīb,
Ta'rīkh Kabīr,
Ta'rīkh Ṣaghīr (both by al-Imām al-Bukhārī)
Thiqāt by Ibn Ḥibbān,
Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ, by al-Dhahabī,
Mushtabih al-Nisba by al-Dhahabī,
Ansāb by al-Sam'ānī and
Tahdhīb al-Asmā.

The First Principle

The principle of investigation has been laid down by the *Qur'ān* itself. The *Qur'ān* says, "O you who believe, if an evil-doer comes unto you with a report, then enquire strictly" (49 : 6). A saying of the Prophet, too, confirms this :— "If one relates whatever one hears from others, it is enough for him to be regarded as a liar".

The Second Principle

The best principle of investigation in order to ascertain the truth of a report is to see whether the statement stands to reason.

This principle, too, has been, enunciated by the *Qur'ān*.

When the hypocrites started a calumny against 'Ā'isha (wife of the Prophet), they advertised and propagated this in a way that some of the Companions of the Prophet were misled. The *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī and the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim both state that even Ḥassān, the poet, was led to believe it; and consequently was ordered to be punished for libel. The *Qur'ān* says: 'Verily those who brought forward the calumny were a small band among you" (24 : 11). The author of *Tafsīr al-Jalālain*, a famous commentary of the *Qur'ān*, while explaining the word "*MINKUM* (منكم)" (from among you), says that by this is meant a group of Muslims. One of the verses of the *Qur'ān* that exonerates 'Ā'isha and declares her chastity runs thus: "And wherefore, when ye heard it, did ye not say, it is not for us to speak thereof, hallowed be Thou, that is a slander mighty" (24 : 16). In accordance with the general principle, the procedure for an enquiry would have been to ascertain the names of the reporters and then to see if they were trustworthy. This done, their statements were to be taken. God, however, says that it ought to have been discarded as a baseless calumny. This establishes the principle that an incident that sounds so highly incredible ought to be rejected oughtright as false.

Thus the method of enquiry called "Dirāya" (judging the truth of a report in the light of one's previous knowledge and experience) had made a beginning even in the days of the Companions of the Prophet.

Some fuqahā' (jurists) are of the opinion that ablution, or *WUDU*, has to be performed again if one takes anything cooked on fire. When Abū Huraira attributed this saying to the Prophet in the presence of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās, the latter said that if it were so, ablution would no longer stand even if one drank water heated on fire.[1] Not that 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās considered Abū Huraira a weak narrator,

1. *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Tirmidhī, Chapter of *Wuḍū*.

yet he was not prepared to accept this report as it was against Dirāya (Common knowledge and experience). In his opinion Abū Huraira might have erred in grasping the actual meaning.

Side by side with the compilation of books on traditions, the traditionists were engaged in framing the principles of Dirāya. A few of these principles are given here :—

Ibn al-Jauzī says that if you find any Ḥadīth to be contrary to reason and against the accepted principles, then know it for certain that it is fabricated. You need not bother about the narrators' reliability or unreliability. Similarly, reports that are contrary to our experience and observation and do not admit of any interpretation need not be accepted. Similar is the case with the sayings that threaten people with severe chastisement for trivial errors, or which promise enormous rewards for insignificant acts of virtue, (such sayings are mostly current among the preachers from the pulpit and the unlettered), or the traditions that border on absurdity e.g., the saying that one should not eat a gourd without slaughtering it. Consequently, some of the traditionists hold that the absurdity of the statement is in itself an argument for the falsehood of the reporter. The presumptions given above relate to the reports, but they may as well relate to the reporters, for example, the story of Ghiyāth and Caliph Mehdi. The same presumption should hold good relating to the reporter if he narrates a tradition that has not been narrated by any one else and the person has not even seen the person he narrates from, or when he is the single reporter while the nature of the report warrants the knowledge of the fact to others as well (as Khaṭīb al-Baghdādi has elucidated the point in the early chapters of his book *al-Kifāya*), or the reported incident, if, true, ought to have been narrated by hundreds of persons, for example, if some one says that an enemy force prevented the pilgrims

from making the holy pilgrimage".[1]

The sum and substance of the foregoing discourse is that the following categories of reports are to be discredited without an enquiry into the characters of their narrators :

1. The traditions that are contrary to reason.
2. The traditions that go against the accepted principles.
3. The traditions that belie common observation and physical experience.
4. The traditions that contradict the *Qur'ān* or a Mutawātir Ḥadīth (repeatedly corroborated tradition) or go against a decided consensus of opinion (Ijmā' Qāṭi') and do not admit of any interpretation.
5. The tradition that threatens severe punishment for a minor fault.
6. The tradition that sounds absurd and non-sense, e.g., "Eat not a gourd without slaughtering it".
7. The tradition that promises big rewards for trivial acts of piety.
8. A tradition narrated by a single person who has never personally contacted the man from whom he narrates.
9. A tradition that ought to have been known to all and sundry, but has only a single narrator.
10. Any tradition concerning an incident so noteworthy that, if it had actually taken place, it ought to have been related by many, and yet there is but a single narrator to report it.

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1. The original book *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, Lucknow edition, is full of mistakes. Unfortunately, I had to follow its text. In fact, these principles have been framed by the traditionists and not by Ibn al-Jauzī.

Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī, in his book *al-Mauḍū'āt*, has elaborated certain criteria for judging the authenticity of a Ḥadīth, and has cited examples which we summarise hereunder :

1. Any Ḥadīth full of non-sense, which the Prophet could never have uttered ; for instance, the saying, "If one recites '*La Ilāha Ill-Lallah-Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh*' (There is no god but Allāh and Muḥammad is His Messenger), God creates out of his words a birth with seventy tongues, each tongue having seventy thousand words of the Kalima.
2. Any Ḥadīth that runs contrary to observation and experience, e.g., "Brinjal is the cure for all diseases and ailments."
3. Any Ḥadīth that cancels another Ḥadīth of established authenticity.
4. Any Ḥadith that states something against actual experience, e.g., "One should not take one's bath in water heated in the sun, as it causes leprosy".
5. Any Ḥadīth that does not sound like a prophet's utterance, e.g., "Three things improve eyesight, namely, green meadows, flowing water and a beautiful face".
6. Any Ḥadīth that predicts the future, specifying the exact date and time, e.g., such an incident is to occur on such and such a day in such and such a year.
7. Any Ḥadīth that looks like the words of a physician, e.g., "Harisa (a kind of sweet preparation consisting of wheat, meat, butter, cinnamon and aromatic herbs) gives vigour to a man" or that" a Muslim is sweet and loves sweets."
8. Any Ḥadīth that is obviously wrong, e.g., 'Iwaj ibn 'Unaq was 3,000 yards (2,742.8 metres) in height.

9. Any Ḥadīth that contradicts the Holy *Qur'ān*, e.g., the saying that the life of the world is to be 7,000 years. Were it true, anybody could tell when the Day of Judgment would come, although it is established from the *Qur'ān* that no mortal knows when the Last Day will come.

10. Any Ḥadīth concerning Khiḍr.

11. Any Ḥadīth whose language is vulgar.

12. Any Ḥadīth that describes that efficacy and merits of the various chapters of the *Holy Qur'ān*, though many such traditions are found in the commentaries of al-Baidāwī and the *Kashshaf*. [1]

It was on the basis of these principles that the traditionists rejected many sayings, for instance, the Ḥadīth that the Prophet had exempted the Jews of Khaibar from the payment of Jizya (capitation tax), and had given them a written document to this effect. Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī, while rejecting this saying, has given the following reasons :—

1. Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh is said to have been one of the witnesses to the document ; whereas Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh had breathed his last in the battle of the Trenches (much earlier than the battle of Khaibar).

2. The scribe of the document is said to have been Mu'āwiya. But Mu'āwiya embraced Islam after the conquest of Mecca (long after the battle of Khaibar).

3. Jizya had not been enforced or sanctioned till that time. It was enforced after the battle of Tabūk.

4. The document is reported to stipulate that no forced labour would be exacted from the Jews of Khaibar. As a matter of fact, forced labour was not in vogue then.

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1. *Maudū'āt*, Mujtabā'ī Press Delhi, p. 92.

5. The people of Khaibar had offered a stiff opposition to Islam and so they could not have been exempted from the payment of Jizya.

6. The tribesmen living in distant parts of Arabia who had not shown much hostility to Islam were not exempted ; how, then, could the Jews of Khaibar be exempt from its payment ?

7. Exemption from the payment of Jizya would mean that the Jews of Khaibar had been friendly to Islam and as such deserving of concession. But the fact was that, shortly after, they had to be banished from their land.

REVIEW

1. Review.
2. *Sīra* compared with Traditions
3. Disregard of Traditions by the *Sīra*-writers
4. False Play of *Sīra*-writers
5. Principles of Narration Sometimes not Followed
6. Causal Relations Ignored
7. Nature of the Report and the Status of the Narrator
8. Subjective Element in a Report
9. External Influence on Historical Narrations
10. Circumstantial Evidence and Its Value
11. Two Schools of Companions
12. Report—Actual Words or Main Idea
13. Ḥadīth Narrated by a Lone Narrator
14. Conclusions

Review

In the preceding pages we have given a brief and plain

history of the *Sīra* literature. We now wish to discuss its various aspects.

There are hundreds of books on *Sīra* now available, but the ultimate sources to which they are all indebted are : Ibn Isḥāq, Ibn Sa'd, al-Wāqidī and al-Ṭabarī. Books other than these are later products and draw from them the facts they record—here we are not taking into account the Ḥadīth literature. Thus it is necessary to review these four books critically and exhaustively.

Of these al-Wāqidī deserves no notice. Traditionists are all agreed that al-Wāqidī coined and fabricated traditions—a fact borne out by his book itself. His descriptions of very minor incidents are so replete with varied and interesting detail, the like of which no pen, however masterly, can so vividly describe even the events to which the writer has been an eye-witness.

The other three writers are quite reliable. Ibn Isḥāq, though criticised by the Imām Mālik [1]and some other traditionists, holds a high place ; and a traditionist like the Imām al-Bukhārī, in his "*al-Juz' al-Qirā'a*" (chapter on reading), has quoted many a saying from him.

As to Ibn Sa'd and al-Ṭabarī none has to say any things against them. Unfortunately, however, their personal integrity and position of authority do not guarantee the authenticity of their works on *Sīra*. They were not eye-witnesses to any incident and have consequently quoted from others, many of whom are untrustworthy. Moreover, the original book of Ibn Isḥāq is not traceable here.

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1 Here I beg to differ. The fact is that the Imām Mālik differed with some of the views and opinions held by Ibn Isḥāq. But soon after this difference, the Imām Mālik realised his own mistake ; and had the greatness of withdrawing his earlier remarks about him. The Imām Mālik is also reported to have written about this to Ibn Isḥāq and along with his letter he also sent to him some gifts, which Ibn Isḥāq accepted. This shows that al-Imām Mālik held Ibn Isḥāq very high in his opinion—Translator.

What we have here is its version as edited and altered by Ibn Hishām. But Ibn Hishām has reproduced Ibn Isḥāq's book as re-written by Ziyād al-Bakkā'ī, for he had no direct access to it. Ziyād al-Bakkā'ī himself is a respectable author; but he falls short of the high criteria of the traditionists. Ibn Madīnī (the teacher of al-Bukhārī) says that al-Bakkā'ī was a weak narrator and so he had to give him up. So does Abū Ḥātim discard him as a source worth-quoting. Al-Nasā'ī too regards him as unreliable.

More than half of the reports related by Ibn Sa'd have been borrowed from al-Wāqidī : hence they deserve no better respect than the reports of al-Wāqidī himself. As regards the other sources utilized by him, some are reliable, others not. Similarly, most of the chief narrators that feed al-Ṭabarī are untrustworthy, such as Salama Abrash, Ibn Salama and others. Thus the books on *Sīra* do not stand at par with the traditions in authenticity. Only those statements that may stand scrutiny are worth recording,

Sira Compared with Traditions

The reason for the inferior authenticity of books of *Sīra* is that research and scrutiny were exclusively confined to the saying of the Prophet on Law (Fiqh). It was supposed that the traditions bearing upon the do's and don'ts were to be critically examined, while the rest, dealing with the life and virtues of the Prophet, did not demand a very severe and cautious scrutiny. Zain al-Dīn al-'Irāqī, a prominent traditionist, in the preface to his book *al-Sīra al-Mauẓuma*, says : "A lover of this branch of learning (*Sīra*) should remember that books on *Sīra* incorporate all sorts of reports, *Ṣaḥīḥ* as well as *Munkar*".

It was for this reason that many unauthentic sayings dealing with the status and excellence of the Prophet or with the meritoriousness of his pious acts got currency. Even learned scholars had no objection to incorporating them in their books. The great scholar Ibn Taimiyya, in his

book *at-Tawassul* says : This Ḥadīth has been quoted by authors who have written on supererogatory services and prayers ; for instance, the work of Ibn al-Ṣīnī and Abū Nu'aim, with all other books of that type, contain a large number of fabricated traditions that are quite unreliable ; and this is the agreed opinion of all the scholars".[1]

Al-Ḥākim, in his *Mustadrak*, has quoted a tradition to the effect that when Ādam committed the Original Sin, he prayed to God in these words : "O God, forgive me for the sake of Muḥammad". At this God asked Ādam how he came to know of Muḥammad ? Ādam replied that on the pedestal of the 'Arsh (heavenly seat of God) he had seen inscribed the Kalima (There is no god but Allāh and Muḥammad is His Messenger) ; and added that this had led Him to believe that he whose name God associated with his own name must certainly be dearest to him. God replied that Ādam was right and that if Muḥammad had not been there, He would not have created Ādam. This tradition has been quoted by al-Ḥākim with the comment that it is an authentic report. Ibn Taimiyya, having quoted the comment of al-Ḥākim says : "Al-Ḥākim has faith in sayings of this type. Leading traditionists declare it to be baseless. They are of the opinion that many of the sayings approved by al-Ḥākim are coined and forged. Similarly, there are many traditions in *Mustadrak* which are held to be true by al-Ḥākim, while recognised traditionists declare them to be forged". On another occasion he refers to the book of Abū Sheikh al-Isphahāni and says : "And in it there are many sayings that are true and authentic as also many that are fabricated, weak and absurd. The same may be said of the reports quoted by Khaithamah ibn Sulaimān, exalting and eulogising the faithful Companions of the Prophet. The same is true of the reports that have been recorded in a separate book by Abū Nu'aim al-Isphahāni dealing with the virtues of the Companions. And so are the traditions quoted by Abū Bakr

1. *Al-Tawassul*, Mīnār Press, p. 99.

al-Khaṭib, Abu al-Faḍl, Abū Mūsā Madyanī, Ibn 'Asākir, al-Ḥāfiẓ 'Abd al-Ghanī and other eminent writers".

It is to be noted that Abū Nu'aim, Ibn 'Asākir, Khaṭib al-Baghdādi, al-Ḥāfiẓ 'Abd al-Ghanī and others were leading traditionists ; still they freely quoted weak traditions while dealing with the accomplishments of the Caliphs and the Companions of the Prophet. The only explanation is to be found in the belief that strict care and caution had to be observed only when quoting the traditions telling what is lawful and what is forbidden. In matters other than these they thought it enough to quote the names of those from whom they narrated ; and did not care for a critical study and scrutiny.

Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī, in his *Mauḍū'āt*, says that in the city of Baghdād a preacher narrated a Ḥadīth that on the Day of Judgment God will seat Muḥammad by His side on the *'Arsh*. Al-Imām Ibn Jarīr was indignant when he heard it, and at his door he hung a placard bearing the words : "None can sit by the side of God". At this the people of Baghdād were so infuriated that they pelted the house of Ibn Jarīr with stones till the walls were covered.

One thing is worth mentioning here. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim are by general consent the greatest masters of this branch of knowledge. They had a sincere love and a profound sense of reverence for the Prophet, which is another reason for their superiority over the rest of the traditionists. With all that, they have no space for the exaggerated sayings in exaltation of the Prophet, that have been reported by al-Baihaqī, Abū Nu'aim, al-Bazzār, al-Ṭabarānī and others. Even some of the sayings that one finds in the works of al-Nasā'ī, Ibn Mājah, al-Tirmidhi and others are missing there. This proves that the number of overstatements declines with the progress of critical scrutiny. For instance, al-Baihaqi, Abū Nu'aim, Ibn 'Asākir and Ibn Jarīr relate that on the day of the Prophet's birth fourteen min-

arets of the imperial palace of Persia fell to the ground, the holy fire in the Zoroastrian synagogue died out, the sea of Ṭabriyah (lake Sāwa) got dried up. But al-Bukhārī or Muslim, or any other of the Six Authentic Books of Ḥadīth has nothing to say of this story.

Books on *Sīra* so far written are generally based on al-Ṭabarānī and others of the same class. Consequently, they contain quite a large number of fabricated reports. This led the traditionists to declare that *Sīra* books contain all sorts of reports.

The principles set forth by the traditionists were mostly overlooked by the biographers. The first Principle was that there sould be no break in the chain of the narrators right up to the original source. But all the incidents relating to the birth of the Prophet have a link or two missing in the chain. None of the Companions of the Prophet was old enough to report at the time of the Prophet's birth. The oldest among the Companions was Abū Bakr ; but he too was two years younger than him. This resulted in giving currency to baseless stories concerning the birth of the Prophet, most of which have disconnected chains. For instance there is the story quoted by Abū Nu'aim, said to be reported by the mother of the Prophet, that at the time of the birth of the Prophet, a large number of small birds flocked into the house ; and their beaks were made of emerald and their tongues of rubies ; then a patch of white cloud was seen in the sky floating very low and that this patch descended down and took away the holy babe then a voice was heard announcing that the holy babe should be shown to all the seas, that all should know him.[1] Most of the Maghāzī literature is based on al-Imām al-Zuhrī. But al-Zuhrī's reports mentioned in the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām and the *Tabaqāt* of Ibn

1. *Al-Mawāhib al-duniya* has quoted this report ; which contains much exaggerations. I have merely quoted a small part of it.

Sa'd are mostly disconnected, with gaps in the chain of narrators.

Disregard of Traditions by the "Sira" Writers

It is surprising that eminent writers, like al-Ṭabarī and others, while writing on *Sīra* did not seek help from the standard books on traditions. There are many important events about which one may get valuable information from the books on traditions and thus solve many problems. But books on *Sīra* and history show that their authors have taken no notice of these facts. For example, there is a controversy as to which party was the first to start hostilities after the migration of the Prophet to Medina. From the way the historians and writers on *Sīra* have presented facts, one is led to conclude that it was the Prophet who struck first. But the *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd records an authentic report definitely saying that before the battle of Badr, 'Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy, the famous hypocrite of Medina, had received a letter from the Quraish of Mecca asking him to turn Muḥammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) out of Medina, else they (the Quraish) would come and exterminate them (the Medinites) all as well as the Prophet.[1] The historical and biographical literature has not a word to say of this threat.

Some of the writers realized this fault ; and on a close examination of the traditions, they had to admit that a large number of reports, clearly contradicted by the authentic traditions, had wrongly incorporated in books on *Sīra* and needed correction. But correction was not possible for them because the books had already got into circulation. Ibn Ḥajar quotes a passage from al-Dimyāṭī and then writes : "The above passage points to the fact that al-Dimyāṭī had to revise his opinion regarding many incidents that he had endorsed in persuance of *Sīra*-Writers against the testimony

1. We shall discuss this in detail when dealing with the battle of Badr.

of authentic traditions. This he did before attaining maturity in this art. But the book had got into circulation, and he could not make any corrections.[1]

False Play of Sira-Writers

The later writers on *Sīra* have all drawn from the ancients. As the names of the early writers were supposed to guarantee truth, readers were led to take all the contents of the later *Sīra* literature as true facts. Unfortunately, the original sources were not within reach ; so the readers could not trace out the narrators. Consequently, these statements found way into all *Sīra* literature. For instance, sayings reported by al-Wāqidi were regarded by all as untrue ; but the same traditions, when they were mentioned in the name of Ibn Sa'd, were believed to be authentic. When the original book by Ibn Sa'd was available, only then it was found that almost all the material contained in it had been borrowed from al-Wāqidī.

Principles of Narration Sometimes Not Followed

The principles set forth for judging the veracity of the narrators were, in some cases, ignored in respect of the Companions. For example, there are many grades of narrators. Some have retentive memory, keen intelligence and discerning mind, some possess these qualities to a lesser degree, while others possess them still less. These differences are noticed in all kinds of narrators ; and the Companions of the Prophet were no exception. It was on this basis that 'Ā'isha criticised the reports narrated by Ibn 'Umar, while 'Abū Huraira was criticised both by 'Ā'isha and 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās. This we have already spoken of.

This gradation among the narrators forms the basis of many of the questions of great consequence. When two

1. Al-Zurqānī, Vol. III. p. 11.

reports disagree and the integrity of the narrators on either side is not to be questioned, the calibre and the status of the narrators is the deciding factor ; and the report made by superior set is declared to be more authentic. But this criterion is dropped in the case of the Companions. Suppose there is a report made by 'Umar and a contradictory one is made by a bedouin who had chanced to see the Prophet only once. As Companions, both are supposed to stand on the same footing. Al-Māzarī, the famous traditionist, who is often quoted by al-Nawawī in his commentary on the *Ṣaḥiḥ* of Muslim, has criticised this indiscriminate application of the principle of equality. Ibn Ḥajar in the preface to his *Iṣāba*, has quoted al-Māzarī saying, "The dictum that the Companions of the Prophet are all equally judicious does not apply, in our opinion, to a man who may have seen the Prophet by chance or visited him with a purpose and then turned back immediately. By Companions we mean persons who were regularly in attendance on him, who helped him and who followed the Light that he had brought unto them ; and verily such men are successful."[1]

Traditionists in general have disagreed with this view of al-Māzarī. In fact al-Māzarī made a mistake in denying judiciousness to any other than the close Companions of the Prophet. This opposition by the traditionists was, therefore, justified. But we could doubt that the reports of Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī do not stand at par with the reports made by a bedouin ? This fact is to be kept in mind particularly when problems of Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) are involved, or where the issues are subtle and deep.

Causal Relations Ignored

Generally the writers on *Sīra* do not concern themselves with causes and effects, which they seldom seek to inter-

1. *Isāba*, Preface, pp. 10 & 11.

relate. The Europeans, on the other hand, have carried things too far. The European mind seeks a cause for each effect ; and weaves into a connected chain of events a whole guess-work of far-fetched possibilities and probabilities. His personal bias and objectives mould his writings, as he sets before himself a particular aim and makes the whole revolve round it ; the facts he describes are all directed to serve the end in view. On the contrary, the Muslim historian tries to find out facts, impartially and with utmost integrity, little caring for their bearing on history or his religious convictions. His main object is the discovery of truth ; and at the altar of Truth he will sacrifice even his beliefs and national interests.

But there the pendulum swings to the other extreme. In his extravagant love for factual description, untinged by subjective colour he ignores the concomitant facts that could evidently explain their effects. He passes on leaving the incidents half-said, dull and dry. For instance, while giving the description of a battle, he will start saying that Prophet sent an army at such and such time against such and such tribe, without giving the reasons that made the expedition necessary. Average readers are led to suppose that non-Muslims could be attacked and destroyed without rhyme or reason, and that the mere fact that they happened to be infidels was a sufficient ground for an attack. Consequently, critics ascribe the spread of Islam to the sword. But a close study reveals that in all cases wars were made upon those hostile tribes that had been found making preparations for an attack on the Muslims.

Nature of the Report and the Status of the Narrator

It is to be noted that the position and status of the narrator must vary according to the nature and importance of the incident. Suppose a man, generally regards as trustworthy, narrates an ordinary incident that commonly occurs and may occur at any time, his version may then be

accepted without any hesitation. But if the same narrator narrates an extraodinary incident that runs counter to general experience and cannot be reconciled to the attendant circumstances, it should then require a stronger evidence and the reporter has to be uncommonly judicious, discerning and scrupulous, far above the average. He should of necessity be more impartial, more scrupulous, and should possess a deeper insight than an ordinary witness.

For instance, a commonly debated question is this : Is it necessary to impose an age limit for narrators ? Most traditionists hold that a five year old child may narrate a tradition or may later on report an incident he had experienced at the age of five ; and his narration ought to be accepted.[1] For example, there is the case of Maḥmūd ibn Rabī' who at the time of the Prophet's death was five years old. Once the Holy Prophet, by way of sporting with him, spat on him the washing of his gargle. This incident was narrated by him when he was a young man ; and people made no objection. This proves that a report relating to incidents witnessed at this stage of life might be admissible. But some traditionists differ. The author of the *Fatḥ al-Mughtīth* says : "Some people hold that such a narration should not be accepted ; they are not inclined to accept a narration referring to the experience of a minor". The followers of the Imām al-Shāfi'ī hold this view. 'Abd Allāh ibn Mubārak too hesitated in accepting the narration of a child."[2]

But the pros and cons are both open to discussion. For example, if a child reports that such and such person whom he had seen, had a hairy head, or that he was old, or that

1. There seems to be some ambiguity of expression here. With all that, the issue involved relates to an experience at the age of five reported in after years, not to a child of five appearing as a reporter (Translator).

2. For details see *Fatḥ al-Mughtīth* (Lucknow Edition), pp. 166-168.

the man used to carry him in his arms, then there is no reason to disbelieve him. But if this child narrated how a certain gentleman had explained a delicate problem of religious law it would be highly doubtful if he had properly grasped the thing explained. The scholars of Fiqh had this point in mind. The author of the *Fatḥal-Mughīth* had quoted from *Sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab*, says : "It is permissible to accept the version of a grown-up child concerning observable facts only ; but reporting a Ḥadīth or a legal verdict, the narration of children should in no way be depended on."[1]

Unfortunately, this principle was not universally accepted. The author of the *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, says : "Ḍabṭ (comprehension) is of two kinds—external or literal Ḍabṭ and essential or appreciative. External or literal Ḍabṭ relates to the dictionary meanings of words, whereas the essential or appreciative Ḍabṭ extends to their implications in relation to Fiqh. The comprehension or Ḍabṭ considered necessary for a narrator, is the external or literal one. This school holds that it was valid if a narrator narrated the sense of a report when he did not remember the actual words. This was the main reason why the narrators could be suspected of having altered the sense owing to want of knowledge or lack of memory ; and hence the Companions of the Prophet did not narrate many traditions, for it is difficult to retain the sense of words intact in reproduction. But traditionists do not follow such a rigid course in the case of a child (of course a sensible child). They hold that a child when he is able to listen to the talk, and bear company to his elders, can easily narrate what he has heard or seen and his report may be relied on".[2]

There is another problem : Should a report made by a Companion of the Prophet not well-versed in Fiqh, fail to

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1. *Fath* al Mughīth (Lucknow Edition) p. 122.
2. Ibid.

conform to the rules of inductive inference, as set forth by religious law or Sharī'a, would it then be incumbent to act upon it ? Baḥr al-'Ulūm, commenting on the view of al-Imām Fakhr al-Islām in the matter says : "The reasons why al-Imām Fakhr al-Islām holds this view is that people have generally reproduced the sense not the actual words, verbal reproduction is rare ; and one incident has been narrated in different words, not even synonymous. Not only that we meet metaphorical expressions. Hence the narrator, if not a scholar of Fiqh, may err in understanding the legal significance of the report. But this does not imply imputation of a false statement to a Companion".[1]

The traditionists were not ignorant of the principle that the character of evidence must vary in accordance with the character of the report. Al-Imām al-Baihaqī, in his *Madkhal*, quotes Ibn Mahdī as saying : "When we quote from the Prophet injunctions forbidding or allowing, we make a thorough examination of the sources and the status of the narrators ; but when we come to the traditions expounding the merits and excellence of persons and things or announcing rewards or punishments in the Hereafter, we relax our criteria for the sources and sometimes overlook the status of narrators".[2]

Al-Imām Ibn-Ḥanbal says : "Ibn Isḥāq is a narrator on whose reports we can depend so far as Maghāzī are concerned. But when there is a question of legal and religious injunctions, then we require men like this", and saying this he closed his fist tight.[3]

This means that in view of the importance of a report, the traditionists took into account the status of the narrators. It was on this account that al-Imām Ibn Ḥanbal declared Ibn Isḥāq to have been dependable with respect to

1. *Sharḥ Muslim*, p. 432.
2. *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, p. 120.
3. Ibid.

military history, but was not to be relied upon in matters of Fiqh.[1] This is simply a restatement of the principle that the character of the sources must corresponed to the nature of the incident ; and that the evidence required must vary with the importance of the event. But legal injunctions are not the only important things.

The Ḥanafī school did realize that the nature of the event was very important. Hence they said, we must ascertain, when faced with an improbable report, whether the narrator is learned in Fiqh and capable of giving a ruling. In the book *al-Manār* it is stated thus : "If the narrator happens to be a man of established fame for his knowledge of Fiqh and his proficiency in passing judgement, like the first Four Caliphs or like the 'Ibād Allāh ('Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās, 'Abd Allāh ibn Zubair and 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ), his narration need not be disputed and circumstantial consideration should not be allowed to disqualify it. This is a view contrary to that held by al-Imām Mālik. But when the narrator happens to be a man who thought otherwise dependable and judicious, knows nothing of Fiqh, just as Anas and Abū Huraira were, then it will be binding to follow the saying only when it is warranted by circumstantial evidence available ; if not, circumstantial consideration should not be unnecessarily set aside."[2]

The question whether Abū Huraira was a man of Fiqh or not is debatable. Some scholars hold him to be an authority. But this is a side issue ; for it is the principle and not the personality that is under discussion.

Subjective Element in a Report

A very important and highly debatable question arises

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1. Al Imām Mālik and not al-Imām Ibn Ḥanbal. See my previous note.

2. *Nur al Anwār*, pp. 176, 177.

when we try to differentiate the objective truth for the subjective additions by a narrator. Scrutiny sometimes reveals that much of what the narrator is describing as a fact is mostly his own imagination. There are many such examples; we cite only a few of them.

When the Prophet, displeased with his wives, began to live in seclusion, it was rumoured that he had divorced them all. 'Umar heard of it and came to the Prophet's mosque. He saw people assembled there talking of divorce.[1] 'Umar himself went to the Prophet asked him if it was a fact. The Prophet said he had not divorced them. This Ḥadīth has been mentioned in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī at several places, with slight difference in words. The version in the chapter on "Nikāḥ" (Marriage Contract) is commented upon by Ibn Ḥajar thus: "The rumour that gains currency, though repeated by many, need not be necessarily true unless ultimately based on observation by the ear or the eye. Thus it is probable that the particular Anṣārī and the rest of the Companions whom 'Umar had seen talking it over the pulpit, may have believed the rumour, because some person seeing the Prophet living in separation from his wives, which was not his custom, had supposed that the Propet had divorced his wives so he gave publicity to his conjecture. People then started repeating it to one another. This man who first of all set it afloat must have, in all probability, been a hypoerite".[2]

Just think of, the Companions assembled in the mosque of the Prophet, and all relating the Prophet's divorce of his wives. The Companions of Prophet are all trustworthy and reliable men; and a large number of them is narrating this incident. But enquiry later on proves the story to have been a mere conjecture. Ibn Ḥajar has very courageously

1. *Ṣaḥiḥ* of al-Bukhārī, Chapter on '*Īlā*'.

2. *Fatḥ al-Bāri*, Cairo edition, Vol. IX, p. 257.

declared the originator of the rumour to have been a hypocrite.

There are similar incidents concerning 'Ā'isha, of which one is known as the incident of "*Ifk*" (false accusation). Ibn Ḥajar's remarks are equally applicable to these reports. They must have been the malicious imputations of some hypocrite, which got currency among the Muslims in general.

External Influence on Historical Narrations

It is a recognised fact that history telling has always been susceptible to external influences; the most powerful of them being the influence of the government. Muslim historians, however, will always claim credit that their pen had never bowed down to the sword.

Traditions were first formed in book form in the days of the Umayyads, who, for about 90 years, throughout their vast dominions stretching from the Indus in India to Asia Minor and Spain, insulted the descendants of Fāṭima and got 'Alī openly censured in Friday sermons at the mosques. They had hundreds of sayings coined to eulogize Amir Mū'awiya. Under the 'Abbasids, predictions relating to each Caliph by name made their way into Ḥadīth literature. But what was the result ? In the very days of these Caliphs traditionists boldly declared that such sayings were coined and absolutely baseless. Today we find none of this rubbish in the Ḥadīth literature. The 'Abbasids and the Umayyads who in their own days were regarded as the 'Shadow of God' and the 'Vicegerents of the Prophet' are now seen in their true perspective. Once a poet read out a panegyric in praise of the famous Caliph Māmūn al-Rashīd, saying that had the caliph been there at the time of the Prophet's death, the question of succession would never have cropped up ; and both the parties would have chosen him as their first Caliph. Just then in the open court there stood up a man who said,

"He is telling a falsehood for the great grand-father of the Caliph was there when the Prophet died ; but who cared to take notice of him". He meant 'Abbās, the ancestor of the 'Abbasid caliphs. Māmūn had to appreciate this irrefutable though disrespectful reply.

Nevertheless, this extensively operative factor could not remain totally ineffective ; and in the books on Maghāzī one may easily discern the traces of its influence. The old method of writing history was to describe battles and military exploits in lengthy detail; while administrative measures and social conditions were either entirely neglected or dealt with in a manner so discursive and unappealing that they easily escaped notice. When later on, Muslim authors took to writing, they had no better models before them. The first influence of the Maghāzī models is to be seen in *Sīra* receiving the name of Maghāzī, just as the biographies of kings and emperors were given the names of *Shāh-Nāmeh* or *Jang-Nāmeh*. Accordingly, early books on like *Sīra Sīra* of Mūsā ibn 'Uqba and *Sīra* of Ibn Isḥāq are known as books of Maghāzī. Like history books incidents have been described in chronological order, year by year, with warfare occupying a prominent place, and chapters begin with the name of some battle as the heading.

This method, though not quite proper even for a political history, was decidedly unsuited to the biography of a Prophet. A Prophet may have to indulge in warfare, when he appears to us as a conqueror or a general : but this is not the true picture of a Prophet. Piety, sanctity, forbearance, generosity, love of humanity and altruism are the waft and warp that make up the texture of his personality. Even when one is misled to take him for an Alexander, penetrating eye may easily see that it is not Alexander, but an angel from heaven.

That is why the style of Maghāzī differs from that of books on *Sīra*. Biographers say that when the Prophet laid

siege to the fortress of Banū Naḍīr, he ordered their groves to be cut down.

(The Holy Qur'an too makes a brief reference to it).

They also speak of the Jews having protested against this order as unfair and unhumanitarian. But they do not explain the reasons and pass on.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE AND ITS VALUE

Another great problem is whether a report that contradicts reason or an established fact, or surpasses all likelihood in view of circumstances definitely known, is to be accepted simply on the ground that the narrator's integrity is recognised and the chain of reporters unbroken. Ibn al-Jauzī has declared that reports that go against reason should be rejected without enquiring into the character of their narrators. But the controversy does not end here. Reason is an elusive term. Advocates of the school that relied on reports argue that the word 'reason', when allowed an extensive application, is sure to give anybody a free licence to reject any report on the ground that, in his opinion, it did not stand to reason.

The fact is that it is hard to decide the controversy one way or the other. Generally it is recognised that a report of which the narrators are all persons of sound integrity and the chain is unbroken is not to be rejected, although it does not stand to reason. The following instances will be useful :

1. The report to the effect that the Prophet, when offering his prayers was made by Satan to utter words "*Tilka al-Gharānīg al-Ulā*" in praise of idols, was discredited by all the traditionists as weak and baseless. The traditionists argued that had it been the case many Muslims must have been led astray ; but nothing like this happened. Ibn Ḥajar, in his *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, comments on this argu-

ment and says : "Such arguments cannot hold on principle, for a report received through various and several sources is an argument in itself, meaning that there is something of truth in it".[1]

2. In the *Saḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī there is a report that the Prophet Abraham told a lie on three occasions. Al-Imām al-Rāzi rejected this report saying that it forced one to grant that a Prophet could lie ; he thinks it safer to suppose that any of the narrators was a liar. Al-Qasṭallānī, quoting the view of al-Imām al-Rāzī, says : "The view of al-Imām al-Rāzī is unacceptable, because the report, part of which is fully corroborated, is not the only report that ascribes a false utterance to the Khalīl (Abraham). How can we condemn the reporter, when there are these clear words of Abraham, viz ; 'This is the work of the greatest of them', 'I am in a wretched condition', and 'Sarah is my sister'.[2] In all these three sentences, certainly Abraham did not mean what the words outwardly indicate".[3]

Let us be content with these two instances, though many more could be added.

1. *Fatḥ al-Brāi*, Egypt Edition., Vol. VIII, p. 333.
2. These words occur in the Arabic version of the *Torah*.
3. Al-Qasṭallānī, Vol. V, p. 280.

Two Schools of Companions

On the other hand there is a group that hesitates to accept a report contrary to reason or unwarranted by attendant circumstances. This tendency was there even in the days of the Companions and continued to the day of the later traditionists. We shall quote several instances because this school stands opposed to the view generally prevailing :

1. Abū Huraira said to 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās that the Prophet had once remarked that eating things heated by fire made a fresh Wuḍū' (ablution) necessary. Ibn 'Abbās replied that it would then mean that they could not perform ablution with hot water. At this Abū Huraira said to him, "Oh my nephew, when you hear a Ḥadīth of the Prophet, you should not start telling adages".[1]
2. In his perface to the *Ṣaḥiḥ* Muslim, the author mentions that Ibn 'Abbās, when the judgments pronounced by 'Alī were placed before him, began to take copies of some and rejected others saying, "By God, if 'Alī pronounced this judgment 'Alī must have been one of the misled". (But since 'Alī was not misled, it is not his judgment).

Following this in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim there is yet another saying to the effect that some people brought to Ibn 'Abbās a book in which the judgments of 'Alī had been recorded. Ibn 'Abbās, leaving intact the writing upto a length of one yard,[2] rubbed off the rest of what was written. This shows

1. Ibn Majah and al-Tirmidhi.
2. Books in times of old used to be long scrolls of paper or parchment etc. The ancients preserved their writings each attached to the other width-wise and the whole length folded up.
(Al-Nawawī *Sharḥ of the Sahiḥ* of Muslim).

that Ibn 'Abbās, from the very nature of the judgments felt sure that they could never have been the decisions pronounced by 'Alī ; and so did not bother about the narrators and authorities.

3. The *Ṣaḥiḥ* of al-Bukhārī has a report (Chapter on Prayers) that once Maḥmūd ibn Rabī' told a gathering that the Prophet once said that God would grant immunity to any one who recited the "*Kalima*" (There is no god but He and that Muḥammad is His Messenger), purely for winning His pleasure. Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, at whose house the Prophet had stayed for seven months, was also present. He declared, "By God, I can never imagine that the Prophet may have said what you ascribe to him". Maḥmūd was one of the Companions, and Abū Ayyūb did not doubt his veracity. But as the Ḥadīth seemed to him unwarranted by known facts and circumstances, he was not prepared to accept it; and said that the Prophet could not have spoken like that. The *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī adds that Maḥmūd came to Medina and had it confirmed by his narrator, 'Itbān. But this does not affect the point in question. Whatever reasons Abū Ayyūb had for disbelieving Maḥmūd, the same he might have for disbelieving 'Itbān. Abū Ayyūb never thought. Maḥmūd, to be a liar: he thought he must have misunderstood what had been narrated to him: and this is a suspicion that could be entertained about the first reporter as well. So had 'Ā'isha told certain Companions that they drew from trustworthy and truthful persons, but the ear was often at fault.[1]

Once 'Ammār ibn Yāsir reported a Ḥadīth regarding Tayammum (purification with dust in lieu of water when the

1. The *Ṣaḥiḥ* of al-Bukhārī, Chapter Tayammum.

latter is not available) to 'Umar ; and 'Umar did not believe it. The *Ṣaḥiḥ* of Muslim reports that he admonished 'Ammār saying, "O, 'Ammār, fear God". Hence it was that 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd, when Abū Mūsā argued with him on the strength of this Ḥadith, retorted, "Yes, but 'Umar was not satisfied with 'Ammār's report".[1]

Once in the presence of 'Ā'isha, the Prophet was reported to have said that weeping and wailing for the dead brought tormentation to the departed soul. 'Ā'isha refused to accept it, for it was not in accord with the Qur'ānic verse :

"None shoulders the burden of the other"

(Qur'ān, 32 : 7).

Similarly, the Prophet's saying that those who had been slain in the battle of Badr could hear what the Prophet said was mentioned to 'Ā'isha, and she said that Ibn 'Umar must have been mistaken. Ibn 'Umar was a well-known Companion and still 'Ā'isha refused to accept the Ḥadīth as it was at variance with the teachings of the *Qur'ān*.

Traditionists in their discourses have tried to prove that the reasoning of 'Ā'isha which led her to reject it was at fault. We are not concerned with this controversy. What we wish to drive at is that some of the top-ranking Companions would reject a reported saying when it did not conform to logical reasoning or authoritative proof, even though there was nothing wrong with the narrators.

Next we turn to the controversy whether the husband of a divorced wife or woman should be held responsible for her maintenance during the *'Idda*'.[2] Fāṭima bint Qais was one of the Companions, whom her husband had divorced. She reports that the Prophet, when she approached him, did

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1. The *Ṣaḥiḥ* of Muslim, Kitab al-Jana'iz, records these reports with several versions.

2. For fuller definition of *'Idda* see Appendix.

not order maintenance and lodging for her. She made this statement to 'Umar, and the Caliph remarked that he would not set aside the word of God and the precept of the Prophet on the strength of a woman's statement, of whom he could not say with certainty whether she had remembered the thing or it had slipped out of her mind. Al-Imām al-Sha'bī recited this report of Fāṭima to an audience. On hearing it, Aswad ibn Yazīd pelted him with small pieces of stone for saying such a thing : and reminded him of the words of 'Umar.[1]

Even after the Companions, there was a school which irrespective of the merit of the reporters, did not accept a report to be true if it baffled reason or was contrary to authoritative proof.

1. There is a weak saying ascribed to the Prophet that one who fell in love and remained chaste till he died would attain martyrdom. Ibn Qayyim, in his book *Zād al-Ma'ād*, proves this saying to be baseless by logical argument and then says: "Had the narrators been as illustrious as the sun, even then we would have regarded it as false and whimsical".[2]
2. In the *Saḥīḥ* of Muslim, in the Book on Jihād, Chapter, "al-Fāi'", it is recorded that once 'Abbās and 'Alī came to 'Umar. 'Ābbās said to 'Umar, "O, Caliph, be judge between me and this liar, this criminal, this misappropriator of trusts, this traitor". As no Muslim could ever utter such words for 'Alī, many traditionists have omitted them from their books.[3] Al-Imām al-Māzarī says:

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1. The *Ṣaḥiḥ* of Muslim, Kitāb al-Ṭalāq (divorce).
2. *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Cawnpore Part III, p. 96.
3. Al-Nawawī *Sharḥ Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim*, commentary on this Hadith, & Kitāb al-Jihād, Chapter al-Fāi'.

"When we cannot interpret it any other way, we shall say the narrator must have been a liar".[1]

3. Al-Bukhārī has a report that God created Adam sixty yards in height. Ibn Ḥajar, while commenting on this saying has remarked: "This creates a difficulty. The extant relics of the ancient races, like the residences of the Thamūd and the 'Ād prove that the size of those people was not so colossal as mentioned in the foregoing Ḥadith. Till this time I have not been able to explain away this enigma."[2]

4. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhāri there is a Ḥadith which says that on the Day of Judgment Abraham will say to God, "O God, I remind Thee of Thy promise not to disgrace me in the eyes of others on the Day of Judgment." While discussing this Ḥadith, Ibn Ḥajar says: "Al-Ismā'īlī (Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhim, d. 371/981) has declared this Ḥadith to be unintelligible and has questioned its authenticity."[3]

Ibn Ḥajar has tried to refute al-Ismā'ili, but as Ismā'īlī holds a more authoritative place among the traditionists, his objections, even untenable, should carry weight for he rejected it on logical grounds.

5. There is another report by 'Amr ibn Maimūn to the effect that in the days of paganism he had seen a monkey committing adultery, for which the moneky was stoned to death by the other monkeys. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, a very famous traditionist, refused to accept it on the ground that animals are not bound by religious laws, hence neither could they be

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1. Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥiḥ Muslim*, commentary on this Hadith, & Kitāb al-Jihād, Chapter al-Fāi'.
2. *Fatḥ al-Barī*, Cairo Edition, Vol. XVI, p. 260, Chapter Origin of Mankind.
3. Ibid., Vol. VIII, p. 384.

accused of adultery nor could they be punished for that. Ibn Ḥajar says: "Ibn 'Abd al-Barr refused to accept this story of 'Amr ibn Maimūn on the ground that adultery had been attributed to and sentence passed upon animals who are not bound by any code of morality."[1] Further on, Ibn Ḥajar remarks: "It is not proper to pick holes like that; and if all the narrators are trustworthy, then these monkeys must have been Jinnis, and not ordinary animals".

6. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī there is a report from Anas saying that once Muslims and the followers of 'Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy had a quarrel and at this God revealed the following verse to the Prophet: "And if two parties of the believers quarrel, make peace between them." (*Qur'ān*, 49 : 9). It is a proved fact that 'Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy and his followers had not till then professed Islam, not even outwardly. On this ground Ibn Baṭṭāl has taken exception to the report of Anas. He says that this verse does not concern the quarrel that took place between the Muslims and the followers of 'Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy, for it speaks of two groups from amongst the Muslims, whereas 'Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy was at that time a declared non-believer. Ibn Ḥajar remarks that Anas expressed a probable opinion.[2]

There are many other instances to show that the traditionists used to scrutinize traditions in the light of reason and circumstance, besides looking to the narrators.

REPORT..... ACTUAL WORDS OR MAIN IDEA

There is another controversy whether the actual words

1. *Fath al-Bari* Cairo Edition, Vol. VII. p. 122.
2. The *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhari, Kitāb al-'Ilm, contains details of this. We have given a brief description.

uttered by the Prophet or a Companion were narrated or it was just enough to have the idea expressed in the narrator's words. Traditionists hold that it was not necessary to stick to the words if the narrator described the idea, so that the sense was left unimpaired. But it is a matter for personal judgment to find out whether the narrator has faithfully expressed what was really meant. Consequently, traditionists like 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Umar, Abū Zurāra, Sālim ibn Ja'd, Qatāda and al-Imām Mālik took pains to report actual words.[1] Evidently out of a host of narrators, the number of such cautious persons must have been very small ; and that too only when writing had become known. Usually they expressed the sense and not the actual words. In the *Jāmi'* of al-Tirmidhī, Chapter on "Causes", Sufyān al-Thaurī has been mentioned as saying : [2] "Believe me not if I say to you that I report that I have heard, what I express is only the sense".

Al-Tirmidhī records similar remarks by Wāthila ibn al-Asqa', Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, Ibrāhīm Nakha'ī, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, al-Sha'bī and others.

Cautious Companions felt highly nervous while reporting the Prophet's words. In the Preface to the *Sunan* of Ibn Mājah, there is a report from 'Amr ibn Maimūn that he used to pay a visit to 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd every Thursday night, and he never heard 'Abd Allāh saying "The Prophet said this or that". On a day in an unguarded moment these words escaped his lips. Instantly his head drooped down and when 'Amr looked at him again, he saw his shirt unbuttoned, his eyes full of tears, and the veins of his neck swollen, and he was saying, "The Holy Prophet said this or this or something less or more than this or something like this"

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1. *Jāmi'* of al-Tirmidhī : Chapter on Causes, contains this clarification regarding these men.
2. Ibid.

Al-Imām Mālik looked apprehensive whenever he narrated a Ḥadīth, doubting whether the Prophet had said so or so. Al-Imām al-Shaʻbī says that he remained in the company of ʻAbd Allāh ibn ʻUmar for a year, but he never heard him quoting a Ḥadīth from the Prophet. Sā'ib ibn Yazīd says that he travelled with Saʻd ibn Mālik from Mecca to Medina, but throughout this long journey he did not hear this Companion narrating a Ḥadīth from the Prophet. ʻAbd Allāh ibn Zubair once said to his father, "I have never heard you narrating a Ḥadīth from the Prophet like other Companions". The father replied, "Since I came into the fold of Islam, I have never parted company with the Prophet, but I have heard the Prophet saying that whosoever speaks of him anything untrue, makes his abode in Hell".[1]

Ibn Mājah reports the Prophet himself addressing from the pulpit the words, "Beware, ye shall not narrate much from me".[2]

Here it is worth noticing that the scrupulous care taken with regard to the traditions of this kind has nothing to do with the character of the reporters. Authentic and reliable reporters can never be suspected of a wilful misstatement ; but the most trustworthy and reliable narrator may possibly misunderstand or misreport a saying ; and reports made by reliable Companions, when discounted, were discounted on this basis alone.

Once the following Ḥadtīh was narrated on the authority of ʻAbd Allāh ibn ʻUmar before ʻĀ'isha : "Wailing and weeping by the living bringeth tormentation to the departed soul". Hearing this ʻĀ'isha said, "Neither you tell a lie yourself nor does your narrator, but the ear may err."[3]

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1. All this detail is given in the Preface to the *Sunan* of Ibn Mājah, (Lucknow Edition), pp. 4 & 5.
2. Ibid., p. 5.
3. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Book of al Janā'iz (funeral).

There is another saying from 'Ā'isha about 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar which runs thus : "Of course he did not tell a lie ; yet either he forgot or missed the meanings."

HADĪTH NARRATED BY A LONE NARRATOR

There is another problem created by the "Aḥād Aḥādīth". These are the traditions, which at some stage in the chain hang on a single reporter not supported by any one else. Acceptance or non-acceptance of such sayings is a disputed matter. The Mu'tazilites discredit all such reports as a matter of principle. But it comes to denying a patent fact. In our daily life we readily believe a report by a single man and we never question its truth. For instance, a man comes and tells us that Zaid is calling us, we at once get up ; and we never care for the singleness of the reporter. As opposed to the Mu'tazilites there are traditionists inclined to take such sayings as true and unquestionable. But this is carrying things too far ; and the attitude of the Prophet was opposed to it.

Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī once went to see 'Umar and sought his permission three times. As 'Umar was busy with something, the call was not answered and Abū Mūsā turned back. When 'Umar had done with his business, he sent for Abū Mūsā and asked why he had gone away. Abū Mūsā replied that he had heard the Prophet saying that if one called thrice and there was no response, one should turn back. At this 'Umar asked Abū Mūsā to produce some corroborator or he would punish him. When Abū Mūsā had produced a witness, 'Umar was satisfied. This does not in any way mean that 'Umar did not consider Abū Mūsā a reliable man. But the Ḥadīth pertained to a common experience of every day life, and 'Umar himself had never heard the Holy Prophet saying like that in spite of his long association with him. So he considered a single reporter not quite sufficient and demanded another to confirm it.

A similar incident is reported to have taken place in the days of the first Caliph, Abū Bakr. An old woman who happened to be the paternal grandmother of a dead person came to the Caliph and claimed her share of the property of the deceased. Abū Bakr replied that the *Qur'ān* did not mention a grand-mother's share nor did he know of a saying of the Prophet in the matter. At this Mughīra ibn Shu'ba came forward with a statement that the Prophet allowed one-sixth to a grand-mother. Abū Bakr did not consider a single witness sufficient in such a case, only when Muḥammad ibn Maslama, another Companion of the Prophet, had seconded Mughīra, did Abū Bakr allow the woman her share.

Similarly, in the case of the blood-money of a new-born child, 'Umar did not consider the lone evidence of Mughīra sufficient. More examples of this type can be produced.

The followers of al-Imām Abū Ḥanīfa have adopted a safer course with regard to "Riwāyā Āḥād". They say they may be problematically, not finally, true. Granting that the sources are worthy of trust and reliance, the decision whether a "Riwāyā Āḥād" is genuine or spurious, definitive or merely probable, will in fact, depend on the import of the report itself. If we are informed that Zaid is calling us, we never doubt the information provided the man is reliable and serious. But if the same person tells us that His Majesty the King has invited us to a state function, we would hardly give any credit to the report, unless the news is confirmed through some other source. Similarly, if a narrator says that he had seen the Prophet wearing a white shirt, we shall be prepared to believe him. But if the same person says that he had seen the Prophet coming out bare-bodied (and there is actually a report like that), we will never consider the solitary evidence sufficient.

CONCLUSIONS

In the previous pages we have brought out the attitude

of eminent Companions towards Ḥadīth and its narration, and also dealt at length with the rules and principles followed by the critics and scholars of this science. We reiterate serially the conclusions arrived at :

1. While dealing with an incident, the source we should draw from, should be first the *Qur'ān*, next the well-known authentic collections of traditions, then the other books on traditions, last of all the books on *Sīra*.

2. Books on *Sīra* need scrutiny ; their statements and sources have to be critically examined.

3. Books on *Sīra* being inferior to those on Ḥadīth in respect of authenticity, preference should always be given to the statements of Ḥadīth when the two disagree.

4. In case the traditions record conflicting statements, those made by men of intelligence and aptitude for Fiqh should have preference over others.

5. Biographical events have to be linked to their causes.

6. The criteria for the status and position of a narrator should be flexible according to the nature of the incident.

7. Subjective element entering into a statement has to be distinguished from the objective truth.

8. The impact of external influence has to be appraised.

9. Statements belied by reason, general experience, established principles and attendant circumstances should not be treated as valid.

10. When dealing with important issues varying statements have to be put together and compared

in order to make sure that the narrator has not erred in expressing the meaning intended.

11. The "Riwāyā Āḥād" should be accepted only if warranted by the import of the report and the circumstances of the time.

This enunciation and elucidation of the principles of historital narration reveals that in order to judge the truth of a report in the light of reason and circumstances, the Muslims had certainly developed scientific methods of a very high order. Can the Western biographers claim, or does the entire historical record of nations present, even an iota of the hard labour of the minute observation and penetrating thought the Muslim traditionists brought to bear upon this science to arrive at facts ? Has a single European biographer of the Prophet wielded his pen with an industry so painstaking and an understanding so discriminating ? Or is it even possible for a non-Muslim to handle the subject in conformity with a code of rules as these ?

EUROPEAN BIOGRAPHIES OF THE PROPHET

In another volume we shall discuss in detail the biographies of the Prophet written by Europeans. There we shall make an extensive survey of the material the Europeans have till now produced since the days of Hal de Bert (living in 1139 C.E.). We shall then examine their general trend, their common mistakes, their sources of information and the reason for the common errors they share. Finally, we shall try to judge to what extent malice and prejudice have been at work. Here we propose a discourse on their works, for in this part as well we have had occasion to refer to or comment on them.

Europe remained ignorant of Islam for a considerably long time and when it tried to get to know something, it was suffering from strange notions—calumnious as well as whimsical. A European author writes : "During the first few

centuries of Mohammedanism, Christendom could not afford to criticise or explain ; it could only tremble and obey. But when the Saracens had received their first check in the heart of France, the nations which had been flying before them faced round, as a herd of cows will sometimes do when the single dog that has put them to flight is called off".[1]

How Europe viewed Islam is thus described by a French writer, Henrie de Casteri, whose work has now been translated into Arabic ; "We do not know what the Muslims should think when they get acquainted with all those stories and songs that were commonly current in the Europe of the Middle Ages. All this literature, in prose and verse, is impregnated, for want of knowledge, with malice and ill-will, and to this early material are entirely due the misconceptions and misrepresentations that survive even to this day. To every Christian poet the Muslims were polytheists and idol-worshippers. They were supposed to be worshipping a hierarchy of three divinities—Mahūm or Mawmet or Bafūm or Maphomet, Apollyon and Termagant.[2] The Prophet was believed to have made the deification of his own self the foundation of his faith, the stranger still, Muḥammad (who was an idol breaker and an enemy to image-worship) was said to be inviting people to pay homage to an image of his own that was made of gold".

It was believed that "When the Christians overcame the Muslims in Spain and pushed them as far back as Saragossa, the Muslims then turned back and broke their idols". A poet of this period writes thus ; "Apollyon, the god of the Muslims was lodged in a cave. They fell upon it, scolded it and tied both of its hands, hanged it on a pillar, then trampled it under their feet and smashed it to pieces

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1. Bosworth Smiths-Mohammad and Mohammadonism, p. 63-
2. Just see the utter ignorance of the civilized Europe.—Translator.

with their sticks. They threw the other god of theirs, Mahūm, into a pit, where it was torn to pieces by dogs and pigs. No god had ever been so insulted by his own followers. Soon the Muslims repented of their sins and sought forgiveness of their gods, installed their idols afresh and started worshipping them anew. Hence the Emperor Charles, when he entered the city of Saragossa ordered his soldiers to go round the whole town. The soldiers entered the mosques and broke into pieces all the idols of Mahomet and the other gods with iron hammers". Another poet, Richer, prays to God to let defeat befall the followers of Mahūm and destroy them. Further on, he incites the nobles to a holy crusade saying: "Rise and overturn these idols of Mahomed and Termagant, and throw them into fire as offerings to your Lord".[1] Notions like these had a long lease of life. We shall speak of them in detail in another volume.

EUROPEAN WRITERS OF 17th AND 18th CENTURIES

The mid-years of the 18th century were the dawn of modern era in Europe. The age of European activity and struggle of European freedom and liberty dates back to these years. One thing of interest to us in this era was the emergence of European orientalists, to whose efforts we owe the translation and publication of many a rare Arabic manuscript. It was in this period that Europeans started schools for oriental studies, for literary as well as political ends. Thus the time draws nearer when Europe could hear the story of Islam directly from Islam itself.

The first characteristic of this period is that writers on the history of Islam and the life of the Prophet now turned to original sources for their material instead of hearsay and street-gossip. They could not, however, totally cast aside

1. Arabic translation of Henrie de Casteri's book, Cairo edition, pp. 8, 9 & 10.

the heritage of the past, and continued to use the old material now and then to make their narration tasteful. It was in this period that Europe shook off the bonds of thraldom to priesthood and had its secular affairs divorced from the ecclesiastical. Accordingly, writers on Islam are found divided into two groups—the clerical and the ordinary authors form one group, the other comprises impartial scholars intent on research. The achievements of both are now before us.

This period witnessed also the translations of Arabic books on history. The earliest workers in the field that deserve notice were Arpinius, D. S. Margoliouth, Edward Pococke and Hattinger. Curiously enough, the first translations by these writers were, by accident or choice, made from the works of Christian writers who had lived in Islamic countries in an earlier age, for instance, Sa'īd ibn Biṭrīq Eutychius (d. 939 C.E.), a patriarch of Alexandria, Jirjis ibn al-Makīn ibn al-'Amīd d. 1273 C.E.), a courtier of the kings of Egypt and Abū al-Faraj Barhebraeus ibn al-'Ibrī al-Malaṭī (d. 1286 C.E.), author of the famous *Mukhtasar al-Duwal.*

Ibn al-Makīn's work is a summarised version of the Ṭabarī and the Dhail Ṭabarī (a supplement to the main and the original work). Arpinius, a Dutch orientalist, brought out a part of the book from Leyden with Latin translation, which covered the period from the advent of the Prophet to the end of the Atabiks. We meet with numerous references to this work under the name al-Makīn in the early writings of European orientalists.

The Late 18th Century Writings

It was during the 18th century that the political influence of European imperialists began to penetrate into the Muslim states of those days. This in turn led to the appearance of a large number of Western orientalists, who at the instance of their governments, started schools for

oriental languages, laid foundations of oriental libraries, established Asiatic Societies, brought out editions of oriental books and started translating oriental works.

The Dutch were the first to establish in 1778 C.E., an Asiatic Society in the occupied East Indies. Following their example the English established in Calcutta the General Asiatic Society; and later on in 1788 C.E., the Bengal Asiatic Society. In 1795 C.E., France started a university for teaching modern eastern languages (Arabic, Persian and Turkish). An impetus thus given, similar institutions and societies came to be established in other countries of Europe. Professors of Arabic and Arabic libraries came to be considered a necessity for all the universities in general.

With a few exceptions, all the Arabic books on Maghāzī and *Sīra* that had escaped the ravages of time were one by one published in Europe up to the end of the 19th century, and most of them with translations into European languages. J. J. Reiske (d. 1774 C.E.), the first man in the field, brought out in five volumes a Latin translation of the work of Abū al-Fidā' along with marginal notes. In 1809 C. E., Captain A. N. Matthews published in English the translation of the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ* from Calcutta. In 1856 C.E., A. von Kremer brought out at Calcutta, an edition of *al-Maghāzi* by Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Wāqidī. In 1860 C. E., from Gottingen, Wüstenfeld published an edition of Ibn Hishām's *Sirat al-Rasūl*. This orientalist had also the credit of pusblishing al-Samhūdī's *History of Medina* and the *Ma'ārif* by Ibn Qutaiba. In 1864 C.E., Dr. G. Weil translated Ibn Hishām into German. In 1861-1877 C.E., the French professor, C. B. de Menyard and P. de Courteille brought out at Paris an edition of the *Murūj al-Dhahab* of al-Mas'ūdī with its French translation. In 1882 C. E., al-Wāqidī's work was translated by J. Wellhausen, under the name of *Muḥammad in Medina*, and published

from Berlin. In 1883 C.E., under Houtsma's supervision an edition of al-Ya'qūbī's famous history in two volumes was printed at Leyden. From 1889 to 1892 C. E., Prof. M. J. de. Goeje, Prof. Noldeke and others worked for fourteen years to publish the famous and rare work of al-Ṭabarī. Lastly, Prof. Sachau of Germany, assisted by seven others, published from Leyden the wonderful and rare book the *Tabaqāt* of Ibn Sa'd, a work more comprehensive and detailed than which on the life of the Prophet is not in existence. Its publication continued from about 1900 C.E. up to 1928, volume by volume.

The publication of original works and their translations, the contact between the Muslim countries and the Western nations, the gradual cooling down of religious antipathies and lastly the craving for impartial research, all combined to produce a very large number of writers on Islam and the life of the Prophet.

An Oxonian Professor, Margoliouth, refers to this unending succession of authors in these words : "The long list of Muhammad's biographers knows no end, but to gain a place therein is a matter of pride".[1]

Now we give a brief schedule of the books written particularly on the life of the Prophet or the fundamentals of Islamic beliefs ; most of them are there in our library or have been available to us elsewhere.

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1. Margoliouth, *Mohammad*, Preface, p. 1.

S. No.	Name of Author	Country	Name of Book	Date
1.	Dr. G.B. ?	English	Biography of Muhammad, the Impostor.	1815 C.E.
2.	Dr. White Oxonian, Prof.	English	Bampton Lectures on Islam and Muhammad.	1800 C.E.
3.	Godefrey Higgins M.R.A.S.	English	An Apology for Muhammad.	1829 C.E.
4.	Dr. J.A. Müller	German	Islamism.	1830 C.E.
5.	Garcin de Tassy	French	Islam and Qur'ān	1831—1874 C.E.
6.	Edward Lane	English	Selections from the Qur'ān	1843 C.E.
7.	Dr. Weil	German	Translation and Marginal Notes on Ibn Hisham and Prophet Muhammad.	1845—46 C.E.
8.	Carlyle	English	Hero and Hero-Worship.	1846 C.E.
9.	Caussin de Percival	French	History of Arabia.	1847 C.E.
10.	W. Irving	English	Life of Mahomed.	1849 C.E.

11.	Dr. Sprenger	German	Life of Mahomed.	1851 C.E.
12.	Von Kremer	German	Translation and Marginal Notes on Waqidi.	1856 C.E.
13.	Writer in National Review.	English	Article on Mahomed.	1858 C.E.
14.	Dozy	Dutch	History of Islam	1861 C.E.
15.	Writer in National Review.	English	The Greatest Arab.	1861 C.E.
16.	De Lane	French	Biography of Muhammad.	1861 C.E.
17.	Muir	English	Life of Muhammad.	1861 C.E.
18.	B. St. Hilaire	French	Mūhammad & Qur'ān.	1865 C.E.
19.	Noldeke	German	Qur'ān and Islam.	1869 C.E.
20.	Writer in Quarterly Review	English	Islam.	1869 C.E.
21.	Writer in British Quartely Review	English	Muhammad.	1872 C.E.
22.	Julius Charles	French	Biography of the Founder of Islam.	1874 C.E.

23.	Writer in Contemporary Review.	English	Muhammad & Islam.	1875 C.E.
24.	Bosworth Smith	English	Muhammad and Mohammedanism.	1875 C.E.
25.	Sedillot	French	History of Arabia.	1877 C.E.
26.	Wellhausen	German	Review on Waqidī.	1882 C.E.
27.	L. Krehl	German	Biography of Mahomed.	1884 C.E.
28.	Goldziher	German	Study of Islam.	1890 C.E.
29.	Reman	French	History of Religions.	1892 C.E.
30.	H. Grimme	Dutch	Biography of Mohamed.	1894 C.E.
31.	Henri de Casteri	French	Views on Islam.	1896 C.E.
32.	F. Buhl	Dutch	Biography of Mohamed.	1903 C.E.
33.	Wallaston	English	Half an Hour with Muhammad.	1905 C.E.
34.	Margoliouth	English	Muhammad.	1905 C.E.
35.	Koell	English	Muhammad & Islam.	1894 C.E.

36.	Prince Caetani	Italian	Tarikh Kabir, Muhammad and Islam and Muslim Rulers.	Under Print.
37.	Maj. Leonard	English	Moral & Spiritual Status of Islam.	1905 C.E.

European authors may be divided into three groups ; and each group has characteristics of its own.

1. Authors who are not acquainted with Arabic language and original sources. These men derive their information from books and translations produced by others. Their business is simply to give to a mass of doubtful and inadequate material a shape that answers to their own fancies and inclinations. But it is surprising that this group should have men with sound judgment and love of justice like Gibbon, who would rake up grains of gold from underneath a heap of ashes. But their number is negligible.

2. The next group includes men who, though well-read in Arabic language, and the philosophy and history of Islam, are totally unfamiliar with the religious literature and the science of *Sīra*. These authors have written no systematic books on *Sīra*, yet elated by their knowledge of the language, they incidentally make the boldest assertions they please. There is the case of Prof. Sachau, the famous scholar who got the *Tabaqāt* of Ibn Sa'd publisned. None can deny his wide knowledge of Arabic and his extensive learning. His Preface to the *al-Hind* of al-Bairūnī is an enviable perfor-

mance of reseach work. But in the same Preface, while speaking of Islamic religion he drops things that make us doubt whether it is the same venerable Sachau we had just met with. Noldeke was another German scholar who made deep study of the *Qur'ān*. But his article on the *Qur'ān* in the *Encyclopaedia* (Vol. XVI) lays bare not only his bias but also his ignorance.

3. Next come the scholars like Palmer and Margoliouth, who had sufficiently studied the religious literature of Islam and of whom we might rightly expect much. But notwithstanding their knowledge of Arabic, their extensive study and book-reading, they disappoint us like the poet who said :

"My eyes do see things,
Yet things remain unseen to me".

MARGOLIOUTH

D. S. Margoliouth had read every word in the six volumes of the famous *Musnad* of al-Imām Ibn Ḥanbal, and we declare that not a single Muslim of today can claim to match him in this respect. Yet in all the written record of the world, his biography of the Prophet stands unsurpassed for lies, calumnies, misinterpretations, and biased expressions. His sole excellence lies in the art of giving, by dint of his genius, the ugliest colour to the plainest and cleanest incident in which it is not possible to discover the tiniest black spot.

DR. SPRENGER

Professor A. Sprenger was a German scholar of Arabic. For many years he worked as the Principal of the Madra-

ssah 'Āliya (a famous Arabic College) at Calcutta. We have seen his inspection report of the Shāhī Kutubkhana (Royal library) of Lucknow. He was the first man to edit the *Kitāb al-Iṣāba fī Aḥwāl al-Ṣaḥāba* by Ibn Ḥajar which he got printed at Calcutta. This scholar also wrote a voluminous book on the life of the Prophet in three volumes, which to our surprise is a disappointing performance.[1]

The main cause of all this perversion is the religious and political prejudice inherent in the Western Writers. But in addition to this, there are some other causes that may serve as their excuse:

1. Most of their mistakes are the outcome of the fact that they draw their material entirely from books on *Sīra* and history. They turn to al-Wāqidī, the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām, the *Sīra* of Ibn Isḥāq, *Ta'rīkh* of al-Ṭabarī and others of a piece with them. It is obvious that a non-Muslim contemplating to write a biography of the Prophet cannot but fall back upon books designated as biographies. But the fact is there that none of the books on *Sīra* holds a place of honour as an authentic work, as we have already discussed. Apart from the writers on *Sīra*, the narrators from whom the works on *Sīra*, borrow their material, like Saif, Suri'ī and Ibn Salama are all unreliable ; they may pass as tolerable sources for ordinary facts, but for facts of importance which form the basis of weighty questions, this material is totally worthless.

The surest data for a life-sketch of the Prophet are to be found in books of traditions where all information is traced back to the original source. Our European writers have no

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1. This book is in the German language. Though I do not know German, yet I have seen the quotations quoted from it by certain writers.

access to this valuable store. There are rare exceptions, like Margoliouth, but they are in the first place handicapped by lack of insight into the principles of the science; secondly, even when they are not so disqualified, they are not free from bias——the fire of which the tiniest spark is destructive enough to reduce piles of learning to worthless ashes.

2. Another cause of their crooked approach is that their principles of judging evidence differ from those of ours. The European does not care whether the reporter is a man of truth or is given to lies; he cares little for his morals or his memory. To him such a research is neither possible nor necessary; he merely sees whether the incidents reported by a narrator are in accord with the circumstances and the trends of events. Suppose a most notorious liar narrates an incident which fits itself into the setting of attendant circumstances, conforms to the prevailing trends and does not affect continuity and consistency, then such a statement shall pass muster for the European. On the contrary, the Muslim historian, especially the traditionist, does not give his first care to the subject-matter of the narration; his foremost concern is to find out if the reporter has been registered in the research office of "Asmā' al-Rijāl" as a reliable authority. If not, his statement, in his opinion, does not deserve notice. If, on the other hand, he is one of the reliable narrators, then his statement, though unappealing to reason or conflicting with circumstantial evidence, will be accepted.

This difference in criteria has greatly influenced the writings of the Europeans. For instance, Europeans repose greatest faith in al-Wāqidī, merely because his narration has continuity and consistency with all the details closely

linked and with no gaps and voids in the chain of events. In short all that goes to make a description interesting is there. But in fact this very art of his exposes him. For an unwritten report that has been in oral circulation from mouth to mouth for over a century it is not posssible to be so well-knit in structure. It is certainly possible that, in imitation of historical fiction, a story writer should pick up a few scattered facts, and then, with the aid of conjectures, indications and general information, should complete the dull sketch with floral touches. But al-Wāqidī alone could have the courage to do that, the Muḥaddithūn being incapable of it.

With all that, there is no gainsaying the fact that mere reliability of the narrator does not always count. It is therefore, imperative that the critical tests of reason and circumstance which the Muḥaddithūn devised and which they sometimes ignored be strictly applied as, even an honest narrator cannot claim immunity from error.

Common Views Expressed by the Europeans

The oft-repeated charges the Western Writers bring against the holy person of the Prophet or indirectly insinuate in their writings are the following :

1. The life of Muḥammad, while at Mecca, is the life of a prophet ; but in Medina it suddenly changes for that of a king, attended with the automatic growth of its evils, viz., war-mongering, murder, revenge and blood-shed.
2. Multi-marriages and lust for women.
3. Conversions by force.
4. License for slavery.
5. Diplomacy and resort to pretexts like men of the world.

The readers of this book are requested to see if these charges are justified in the light of a critical study of historical facts.

The Plan to be Followed

Let us now tell our readers the plan and the principles followed in the compilation of this book:

1. In the first place facts recorded in the *Qur'ān* regrading the Prophet's life have been given precedence over statements from other sources. It can be positively proved that the *Qur'ān* describes, or alludes to, certain incidents in a manner that brings controversies to a close, which continue to exist only because people failed to make a careful study of the Qur'ānic verses.

2. Next to the *Qur'ān*, we have followed the Ḥadīth ; against which we have overlooked the evidence of *Sīra*. Facts mentioned in the "*Ṣaḥīḥain*" of al-Bukhārī and Muslim need no confirmation by *Sīra* or history. A serious mistake made by the writers on *Sīra* was that, in books of Ḥadīth, they looked for reports at places and in chapters where these reports ought to have been found in view of their subject-matter. When they failed to find them there, they were content with reports of an inferior worth. But the traditions often give quite a detailed information as a side-issue to a main theme. On a thorough exploration, the "Six Authentic Collections" alone provide the student with all the information required on any topic of importance. The greatest distinction of the present work is that most of our material is derived from the collections of traditions, which the compilers of *Sīra* had neglected.

3. For ordinary facts of daily experience we have been content with Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Hishām and al-Ṭabarī. But in matters of importance we had to be critical, inquisitive and unsparing of labour. The first thing we had to do was to collect from the above-named books the names of all their narrators ; and they ran into hundreds. Then with the help of works on "'Asmā' al-Rijāl", we prepared a chart of their merits and demerits. Thus the value of any report could be judged by a reference to this chart.
4. We have tried our best to make up for all the shortcomings pointed out in the preceding pages.

Parts of the Book

The book is divided into five parts :

1. The first part contains a short account of Arabia, the history of the Ka'ba and then a general description of events (including Ghazawāt) in the life of the Prophet from his birth to his death. The Second Chapter of this volume is devoted to a description of the personal manners and habits of the Prophet, his marriages and off-spring.

2. The second part relates to the office of a prophet. The mission of a prophet is to let people know what to believe, what to practise, what to avoid and how to avoid and how to reform their ways and morals. For this reason the functions of a prophet have been discussed at length in this part of the book. It also deals with the five fundamental obligations of Islam and presents a comprehensive review of its commands and prohibitions explaining their origin and evolution and the good purpose they are meant to serve. They have also been compared to the do's and don'ts in the other religious systems. This part will also give a full

account of the beliefs, morals and customs of the Arabs before the advent of Islam ; and show what changes were wrought by the new faith. Lastly, it will speak of the law given by Islam for the betterment of humanity at large, and then show how it can meet the needs of mankind at all times and in all places.

3. In the third part we shall discuss and describe the history of the *Qur'ān*, state the proofs of its being a miracle and bring to light the highest truths and deepest secrets that it reveals.
4. In the fourth part we shall give details of the miracles performed by the Prophet. In the old books on *Sīra* we find separate chapters dealing with miracles ; but in the present age we feel they deserve a volume to themselves ; there is the need of discussing their necessity and possibility. We shall devote a volume to miracles accordingly. Only those that can be exactly dated will be recorded elsewhere in their chronological place.
5. The fifth part deals with European writings. Here we shall see what they have said of Islam and its Prophet, what sources of information they have utilized, what blunders they made in historical statements and what errors they have committed in appreciating the principles of Islam. We have also given in this book a rejoinder to their charges against the Prophet and his teachings.

We are not sure if it would be possible for us to present to the readers these parts in the given order. As soon as material for any one of them is available and the volume ready, it will be in the hands of the readers.

References and Quotations

Reference to sources is the primary duty of an historian,

A word on the procedure we have followed is therefore advisable :

1. We have quoted from those books that we have ourselves read.

2. Important events have been referred only to authentic traditions or books on history. For ordinary matters or while dealing with minor details of the battles, we have not been much at pains for making the scrupulous research of a traditionist.

3. References to printed works also mention the name of the press. With respect to manuscripts, the bibliography of works on *Sīra* already given mentions the copy we have used.

(WITHOUT HELP FROM GOD, I AM POWERLESS TO DO ANYTHING.

IN HIM I REPOSE MY TRUST AND UNTO HIM SHALL MY STEPS TURN.)

ARABIA ..... Its Name

There is much difference of opinion as to why this peninsula is called Arabia. Lexicographers say that the word "ARAB" and "ARABIA" mean eloquence and force of speech ; and as the Arabs considered themselves more eloquent than any other people in the world, they called themselves "ARAB" and all others "'AJAM" or the gibberish. Others think that originally this tract of land was known as " ARABAH ", a name that occurs in Ancient Arabic poetry :

" The open country of ARABAH shook a great shaking and its sides overbrimmed with blood....."

"ARABAH is a land, the people of which excel in evils as does a thirsty man in drinking cold water".

" ARABAH is a land or a country which is infested by none but the most wise ; or wherein wander none but the most wise and shrewd."

The word ARABAH means a desert in the Semetic language ; and as Arabia is almost a desert so it was given this name.

GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION

Arabia is bounded by the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean on its western, eastern and southern sides respectively. Its northern frontiers are undetermined, extending, as some think, to Aleppo and Euphrates.